

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
November 30th 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Momen Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations.

I thank Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative of India, and his country's presidency for organizing this open debate. I also thank the Deputy Secretary General, the Executive Director of UN-Women and the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations for their insightful presentations this morning.

I welcome the Secretary-General's most recent report on women and peace and security (S/2012/732). In the report, the Secretary-General calls for enhanced women's participation and a stronger commitment to addressing the challenges to women's engagement in the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts and in peacebuilding at all levels.

Twelve years ago, we adopted the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security in the Council. As a member of the Council at the time and one of its core sponsors, Bangladesh was closely associated with the adoption of that historic document. That was our humble contribution to ensuring the rights and role of women in peace and security. Thereafter, several resolutions, such as resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010) were adopted to strengthen the process initiated through resolution 1325 (2000).

There have been some developments in women, peace and security, such as the steps taken to implement the seven-point action plan on gender-responsive peacebuilding, the adoption of the United Nations strategic results framework on women and peace and security and the civilian capacity review. Prevention also gained an increased focus with the inclusion of the protection of civilians in the mandates of 8 out of 16 peacekeeping missions.

However, women and girls still suffer violations of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law, including forced displacement, constraints on humanitarian access and sexual and gender-based violence. Therefore, much needs to be done.

The core message of resolution 1325 (2000) was to ensure women's equal participation at all decision-making levels. In the United Nations context, women's participation should be ensured through achieving a 50/50 gender balance, with a special emphasis on the recruitment of women at higher levels. In general, more female military and police personnel need to be deployed to United Nations peacekeeping operations. For an adequate global balance, women from the South should be considered with special preference for such leadership positions. For all gender-based violence, there should be a zero tolerance policy, and all incidents of such violence must be unequivocally condemned.

The participation of women in mediation and peacebuilding efforts needs to be enhanced. In 2011, out of 14 United Nations peace negotiations, only four included woman delegates. As agreements without gender-sensitive provisions can limit the opportunities for women to achieve basic security, as well as their political, economic and social empowerment, the gender dimension of mediation should be clearly and consistently articulated. It is also important to ensure measures to improve security for women in elections.

Poverty, the struggle and rivalry for resources, socioeconomic injustices and forced occupation lie at the heart of conflicts. They create a breeding ground for such social scourges as conflicts, including violence against women and girls, increase. The impact of that violence not only weakens the safety and security of women and girls but also tears the entire political, economic and social fabric. Therefore, we need to prevent conflict and establish sustainable peace.

When we talk about the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), we see the presence of women's civil society organizations at the grass-roots level. They can help implement peace agreements, ensuring the protection of women's human rights defenders in conflict and post-conflict settings and integrating women's and girl's security into the priorities set during transitions, such as drawdowns of United Nations missions. We strongly believe that our debate and discussion should transcend boundaries and reach grass-roots women, who sometimes lack even the language to express their agony. That has to be done through people's empowerment — the empowerment of distressed people, particularly women at the grass- roots level.

In Bangladesh, from our experience of nation- building, we have embraced a perspective of women's empowerment and developed a model that our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina calls a "peace model". The central message conveyed in the

model is the empowerment of people, including women and vulnerable groups, through a focus on seven interlinked issues. The model advocates empowering people by eliminating hunger and poverty, by providing them with skills, education and training, by including the excluded, by eliminating all forms of discrimination, by providing decent jobs, by guaranteeing participation in governance, and by ending terrorism. I am pleased to note here that at its sixty-sixth session the General Assembly adopted resolution 66/224, entitled, “People’s empowerment and development”, and we have proposed a follow-up draft resolution in the current session of the General Assembly. We seek Members’ support for it.

Women occupy top political leadership positions in our country, from the Prime Minister to ministers of many important ministries. The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees the equality of men and women, within the broad framework of non-discrimination on the grounds of religion, race or gender. The Government has adopted the National Policy for the Advancement of Women and the National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women. The Women’s Development Implementation Committee, headed by the Minister of Women and Children Affairs — basically the Prime Minister — monitors the implementation of policies for women’s empowerment. The result is highly positive. To cite just one example, the enrolment of girls in both primary and secondary schools exceeds that of boys, helped by a waiver of tuition and the provision of stipends for girls in the secondary level.

The Government has enacted laws to protect women against domestic violence, and is currently implementing a number of innovative projects for developing women’s capabilities. In order to involve women in decision-making processes, the Government has adopted a quota system for women in the national Parliament and in recruitment for our civil service jobs — alongside direct election and open competition. It also expanded effective gender-based budgeting in 20 of the country’s ministries. It has been providing microfinancing, mostly to women, and has started providing small business enterprise loans to women- run small and medium-sized enterprises at preferential rates.

In the maintenance of international peace and security, we take pride in our modest contribution of troops and police to United Nations peacekeeping missions. We have made the necessary provisions to recruit women in the police and military. We are pleased that we could deploy two full contingents of all-female formed police units to the United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Haiti. We are committed to continuing our contribution of women to operations for the maintenance of peace and security. I am pleased to report that our all-male troop contingents are fully briefed on gender issues and we have zero tolerance for sexual misconduct.

In conclusion, I reiterate that we in Bangladesh have been making our best efforts to ensure women’s empowerment and participation in all spheres of our lives. We know that much more needs to be done. We are willing to replicate in our national policy any good practices that we learn about from around the world, and we are similarly ready to share our experience with others.