

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, (Conflict Related Sexual Violence)
23 February 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E Mr. Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh

Mr. President, at the outset I would like to express my appreciation to you for organizing this important meeting. I also thank Ms. Margot Wallström, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her comprehensive presentation of the report on sexual violence in armed conflict (S/2012/33).

In the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), the Security Council recognized the important role of women in maintaining peace and security. It also highlighted specific needs and concerns of women during and in the aftermath of armed conflicts. We feel proud that Bangladesh, as a member of the Council at the time of the resolution's adoption and one of its main sponsors, was closely associated with the adoption of that historic document. Periodic meetings of this sort offer us an opportunity to take stock of the progress achieved and the challenges remaining in fulfilling the objectives of the resolution, as well as subsequent resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2000).

Some initiatives of the global community in the first decade of its adoption have been praiseworthy. The establishment of a new body, UN-Women, and the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict have been two significant developments that have placed women at the top of the global agenda. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has also undertaken commendable steps for the better protection and enhanced participation of women.

The situation is far from satisfactory, however. We are disappointed to note that violence against women and girls is still prevalent in many parts of the world suffering from armed conflict. Women and girls, we all know, suffer most as victims of such conflicts. Their suffering is compounded when they are ignored or marginalized in peace processes. Women are too often excluded from both the negotiations that make peace and the institutions that maintain it. We underscore the need to do more to ensure the safety and security of women and girls, particularly during conflict situations and in their aftermath.

The participation of women should be ensured at all stages of peace processes, including conflict prevention, peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. We also believe that poverty and socioeconomic deprivation are the breeding grounds for conflict, including sexual violence against women and girls. We therefore emphasize the importance of fulfilling the economic needs of women and of engaging women at all levels and in all forms of decision-making processes. Women's economic needs may be served by ensuring their access to and participation in income-generating and entrepreneurial activities in such areas as microcredit, vocational training and public health. Women's engagement at all levels of decision-making may be promoted through the recruitment of women to senior-level positions.

In Bangladesh, based on our experience with nation-building and women's empowerment, we have embraced this view and developed a model that our Prime Minister, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina calls a "peace model". She believes that if peace is attained and maintained, development and prosperity will follow. The central message conveyed in the model emphasizes the empowerment of people, including women and other vulnerable groups. I am happy to note here that the General Assembly recently adopted resolution 66/224, entitled "People's empowerment and development".

Women occupy many top leadership positions in my country. The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees the equality of men and women within the broad framework of non-discrimination on

grounds of religion, race or gender. The 345-member National Parliament of Bangladesh has 45 seats reserved for women. We also have a significant number of elected women representatives in local bodies.

The Government has adopted a national policy for women's advancement and a national plan of action. A women's development implementation committee, headed by the Minister for Women and Children Affairs, monitors the implementation of policies for women's empowerment. It has also created a gender-based budget. We are benefiting greatly from all of those initiatives. To cite just one example, the enrolment of girls at primary and secondary level schools exceeds that of boys, and girls in secondary level schools are helped by tuition waivers and the provision of stipends.

We are pleased to make our modest contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. Our troops and police are doing excellent work in various United Nations peacekeeping missions. In line with our pro-women policy, we have been recruiting women in our regular forces, including police and the military. While they contribute to our national security, they are also sent to respond to international calls. For example, we deployed an all-female contingent serving as a female formed police unit in Haiti following the devastating earthquake there.

Finally, let me emphasize that we have a solemn responsibility to protect women and girls against all forms of violence and to ensure their rightful place in line with the letter and spirit of resolution 1325 (2000). On its part, my country stands ready to make its humble contribution to global efforts in promoting the status and role of women both nationally and internationally.