Intervention of Bangladesh Delegation On Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty

Thank you Madam President. Bangladesh delegation reiterates its willingness to cooperate with the mechanisms of the HRC including the special procedures. It is in this perspective we welcome the visit of the SR to Bangladesh in 2009. We have taken note of the follow-up report on Bangladesh.

Madam president, According to the Bangladesh MDGs Report 2011, published with assistance from UNDP Bangladesh, Bangladesh is already in track to meet one of the indicators of target 1 by bringing down the Poverty Gap Ratio to 6.5 against the 2015 target of 8. If this trend continues, the MDG 1 will be achieved well before 2015. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and Sixth Five Year Plan (SFYP) for 2011-2015 focus more on empowering the poor, especially the vulnerable segments of the society, including women, children and the elderly. More than half of budgetary resources have been allocated for poverty reduction activities in Bangladesh.

The government acknowledges the challenges in the rural economy, which is agro-based. We have therefore taken important steps in 2012-13 budget. We have formulated the 'Bangabandhu Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development Academy Act, 2012'. The project targeting poverty alleviation titled 'One House, One Farm' is being implemented in 17,388 villages of 64 districts benefitting 10,38,000 families in rural areas.

[Madam President, according to 'Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010' of Bangladesh, poverty head count ratio has reduced from 41.0 percent to 31.5 percent. ]
Bangladesh is often cited for its best practices for social safety net programmes. Already, we have brought 30.1 percent of rural and about 25.3 percent families of over all of country under poverty line under the coverage of social safety net programmes. Various social security programmes include inter alia, Maternity Allowance for 1,01,200 beneficiaries, Old Age allowance for 24,75,000 beneficiaries, and a number of 9,20,000 widows and divorced/abandoned women are also receiving allowance.

The Vulnerable Group Development Programme has a nationwide outreach covering nearly 750,000 of hard core poor rural women. Institutional micro credit is also provided directly to women by nationalised banks that are spread across rural areas.

According to a report of UNDP titled "Empowered Lives. Resilient Bangladesh," programme on Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA), is addressing marginalised women’s empowerment and stepping out of poverty. [European Union’s mid-term evaluation described the Programme as “one of the best examples of poverty alleviation programs in Bangladesh, with very relevant strategy to pull deprived women out of poverty.”] The project’s unique features make it an ideal model that fits within the government’s aspirations to scale up and streamline national safety net programmes.

Madam President, the National Human Rights Commission was established in 2008. The NHRC can act to address human rights violation sawmoto or upon receiving complaints. According to the definitions delineated in the Act No. 53 of 2009 of Bangladesh that established the National Human Rights Commission, the Commission’s competence includes both civil political and social, economic and cultural rights. [According to the Chapter 1, preamble article 2(f) of the Act, "Human Rights" means Right to life, Right to liberty, Right to equality and Right to dignity of a person as guaranteed by the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh and such other international human rights laws as ratified by the People’s Republic of Bangladesh and enforceable by the existing laws of Bangladesh. Therefore, as Bangladesh has ratified, both ICCPR and ICESCR, the economic, social and cultural rights rightly fall within the scope of the NHRC’s mandate. ]
Bangladesh is home to diverse religious and ethnic minority groups. Besides separate budgetary allocations for religious institutions of minority faiths, several other financial and administrative supports are regularly provided to these communities. In order to ensure rights of minority groups, quota system in higher education and in jobs as well as Special development allocations are provided for ethnic minorities. Other minority communities and backward communities are also under social security programmes.

The SR has observed that wide spread poverty remains a major challenge for the country. Bangladesh is equally challenged by impacts of climate change, natural disasters and non-fulfillment of providing the minimum ODA commitments.

Madam President, on our part, we acknowledge our challenges. We acknowledge that we have not been able to accomplish as much as we would like to. No one has. But what is important is that we have not stopped our efforts. And we will continue to make relentless efforts to advance the cause of human rights.

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