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Intervention at the Special Session of General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+20)

by H E Mr Mohammed Nasim, MP, Minister for Health & Family Welfare of Bangladesh

(New York, 22 September 2014)

Mr. Chair [President],

Ever since Cairo, Bangladesh has been consistent and committed to the principles, goals and objectives of ICPD. In our national planning, we have considerably mainstreamed ICPD elements; and accorded a high priority to the implementation of the ICPD Plan of Action.

In ensuring the related social goods, the Government is driven by the Constitutional and provisions – to ensure well-being and dignity of every citizen through our development efforts and investments in sustainable development, including health sector, girls education, promotion of gender equality and empowering women, creating decent work and employment. At the same time, we are conscious of ensuring good governance for effective delivery of all services.

The progress made by Bangladesh since Cairo is well reflected in Bangladesh's attainment of most of the MDGs:

- At 1.37%, Bangladesh demonstrates being able to effectively controlling population growth. Currently, Total Fertility Rate is 2.3 per woman.
- 32% birth are attended by skilled health personnel. By 2015, it will reach 50%.
- from current 61%, we plan to reach contraceptive prevalence rate to 72%, by 2015; and, reduce the unmet need for family planning to 8%, from current 13.5% by 2015.

Our IMR and MMR have seen substantial reduction. We are on track to achieve all health-related MDGs. Our plans and interventions at sub-national and national levels are geared to sustain and continuously improve maternal, child and reproductive health.

One of our contemporary focus is to reach services through 13,000 Community Clinics and 4,000 sub-district (*Union*) Health and Family Welfare Centres throughout Bangladesh, at rural and community level. Health service delivery network is expanding rapidly. These have already met with some success, through delegated local-level planning.

We are now paying focus on ending child and early marriage, with a view to enduring all-round development of adolescent girls. Government is committed to enforce all laws against child marriage. The recent legal measure of two years' imprisonment of parents who force adolescent girls to marriage, should improve the situation.

Bangladesh continues to champion women empowerment, in a wider sense. Women's integration across all levels of planning is manifest to bring in gender equality in the country. Achieving gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment shows increased awareness about girls' education.

Bangladesh is steadfast in securing productivity within the construct of 'population and development' so that women and girls have access to workplaces that are safe, secure and dignified. That is visible in our timely attainment of MDG 1 targets.

All these should speak of overall social and economic improvement and also of attaining key ICPD goals and benchmarks. Yet, our aspiration for emergence as a Middle-Income Country continues to meet with newer challenges, risks, vulnerabilities.

Financing ICPD Goals has been the most daunting challenge. While responding to new challenges related to 'population and development' and integrating those in our national agenda, it is equally important that LDCs like Bangladesh receive financial, technical and technological support from global community to meet the developmental challenges. This is particularly important while addressing the challenges related to non-communicable diseases. Climate change, for instance, pose another grave risk. We already see much of our developmental gains at stake, including in health sector, as a result of climate impacts.

We expect the Post-2015 framework to capture the existing and emerging health and population issues, robustly. Our unique circumstances, needs and challenges would need to be appreciated; and approached with a 'development' focus. That is how and when the world would be able to secure a transformative and visionary global development agenda, encompassing all the three dimensions of sustainable development.

I thank you.
