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Statement

By

**H.E. Dr. Iftokhar Ahmed Chowdhury**

Ambassador and Permanent Representative  
of Bangladesh to the United Nations

at the

High Level Plenary of the

Forty-ninth Session of the  
Commission on the Status of Women

on

Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Madam Chairperson,

Your skillful conduct of this key event deserves high praise. Please accept our compliments.

Madam Chair,

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Jamaica on behalf of Group of 77 and China. I would, therefore, limit myself to comments on some key issues that Bangladesh, as a developing country, considers significant.

Bangladesh, despite her many and varied constraints, remains fully committed to the implementation of the Beijing objectives at national, regional and international levels. A National Plan of Action has been drawn up by an Inter-ministerial Task Force immediately following Beijing.

We have a separate Ministry solely devoted to the advancement of women and children. We also have a National Council for Women's Development headed by Prime Minister herself. It comprises a cross section of public and private individuals, including some eminent personalities with considerable skill and experience.

Our 'gender-sensitive' annual budget has the largest percentage allocated to education. According to the World Bank, Bangladesh has the highest enrolment in primary schools among developing countries.

Education is free for women upto 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Women have, in fact, greater access to different types of credit in the market. We have lowered the incidence of poverty from 59 percent in 1991-92 to 49 percent now.

Through innovative ideas like micro-credit and non-formal education coupled with active governmental interest on the involved issues, we have largely managed to empower women and mainstream gender. Over one and half million women are employed in the garment industry. They earn nearly 75 to 80 percent of the trade income.

The economic empowerment has also led to a major role by women in the political domain. We have over 13,000 elected women representatives in local Government. Other specific measures, including reservation of 45 seats in the National Parliament, have been undertaken.

We are also actively participating in the regional initiatives for advancement of women particularly in the initiatives taken by South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Madam Chairperson,

At the international level, Bangladesh has always been in the forefront of all debates on the rights and empowerment of women. We had been one of the main sponsors of the Security Council Resolution 1325. We play active role in the UN system, particularly in the Third Committee, CEDAW and the Commission of Human Rights.

We are jointly tabling a resolution on gender mainstreaming with the United Kingdom at the CSW. Only last July CEDAW reviewed Bangladesh, mostly positively. Some of their suggestions are being implemented.

The Special Rapporteur from the Commission on Human Rights, for trafficking in persons, especially women and children, is a Bangladeshi woman. We have also established a National Advisory Committee to combat the scourge of human trafficking.

Bangladesh is consistently among the top troop-contributors in UN peace-keeping. We are seriously considering mainstreaming gender in these efforts.

Madam Chairperson,

Our aims can only be achieved through partnerships across the broadest possible spectrum. We need concerted and consistent action in the review and appraisal of the Beijing process. Only thus, can we move forward, as we seek to do, from advocacy to implementation, from thought to action, and from hope to fruition.

I thank you, madam chair.