

**Statement by H. E. Muhammad Abdul Muhith, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of
Bangladesh to the United Nations at the 56th session of Commission on Population and
Development, New York, 10 April 2023
General Debate: The Population, Education, and Sustainable Development**

Time Limit: 5 Minutes

Madam Chair,

I would like to thank you and the members of the Bureau for your hard work in conducting this session.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statements delivered by Cuba on behalf of the Group of G77 and China and Nepal on behalf of the LDC group.

Madam Chair,

Education is not only a standalone SDG goal but an enabler for achieving all other SDGs.

As the Secretary General's 2023 report on 'Population, Education and Sustainable Development,' has highlighted, there are close interlinkages between education, population growth, economic development and environmental sustainability.

Education and life-long training are critically important to drive innovation and productivity and sustain socio-economic growth. An educated workforce helps realize the positive impacts of demographic dividends and moderates the fiscal and economic challenges associated with aging populations.

Madam Chair,

The pandemic has badly affected education worldwide and is said to have wiped out educational gains achieved over the past 20 years. The pandemic's impact on education has been described as a "generational catastrophe" by the SG's 2021 report on the SDGs.

To address the global education emergency and to accelerate progress toward achieving inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all, education needs to be mainstreamed in national development plans and strategies for achieving the SDGs.

Madam Chair,

Education, like the rest of the SDGs, remains underfunded. The pandemic and the multiple other crises the world is currently going through have only worsened the situation, particularly in the LDCs, LLDCs and the SIDS. UNESCO estimates that education budgets declined by 65% in low- and lower-middle-income countries since the onset of the pandemic.

This trend needs to be reversed. Investment and sustainable financing in education—both through domestic resources and international aid—must be scaled up.

Education infrastructure, digitization, and quality teaching must be adequately resourced.

Access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all people, including the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups— the poor children, those in remote and rural areas, women and girls, and persons with disabilities are critically important to enable citizens to contribute meaningfully to societies.

Madam Chair,

Education has always been a priority for the Government of Bangladesh. Our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman identified education as an important tool for the country's development. Following his footsteps, the current government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has heavily invested in the education sector. Our targeted interventions like stipends, gender-sensitive approaches, cash incentives, and school feeding programs have shown tangible benefits.

Our sustained investments in education have improved school enrolments and quality of education, prevented school dropouts, and helped achieve gender parity in both primary and secondary education. In fact, as per the 2021 Survey on Children's Education in Bangladesh, more girls than boys attend primary, lower, and upper secondary schools in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has already aligned its national education policy with SDG4. The government has also taken initiative to modernize faith-based education with an added emphasis on vocational and technical education to make education skills-driven and employment-oriented.

With the Digital Bangladesh vision, the country's future generations are being prepared for the 4th Industrial Revolution through ICT-based learning. We have launched ICT in Education master plan under which more than 25000 schools have been provided with ICT devices and more than 45000 teachers have so far been trained.

Madam Chair,

There was no dearth of our political will to ensure uninterrupted quality education for our children even during the pandemic. However, ensuring digital devices for all, creating digital content, and preparing teachers to develop and deliver those content were some of the challenges that we faced in our transition to digital learning.

Developing countries need support for enhancing their capacity for digital learning and improving the digital infrastructure for education, thereby bridging the 'digital divide' in learning.

Madam Chair,

For education to be a true enabler for sustainable development, more emphasis should be given to environmental themes in education, with a particular need to expand the integration of climate change and biodiversity across the curriculum, which remains vastly underrepresented.

Investments in education about the environment and sustainable development are critical to raising awareness of and combating climate change and environmental degradation.

I thank you Madam Chair.