



BANGLADESH

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Statement by

H.E. Dr. A K Abdul Momen, Ambassador and Permanent representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations at the General Debate on national experience in population Matters: adolescent and youth (agenda item 4) at the forty-fifth session of the (CPD) New York, 24 April 2012

Mr. Chair,

At the very outset, let me congratulate you on your well-deserved election as the Chair of the Session. I am confident that your able leadership will surely guide the Session's deliberations to a meaningful conclusion. I would also like to thank Mr. Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports contained in documents E/CN.9/2012/4, E/CN.9/2012/5 and E/CN.9/2012/6) on this year's theme "Adolescents and Youth".

Mr. Chair,

Adolescents and youths are important resources of a country. They are the future leaders and decision makers. In Bangladesh, the Adolescents and youth constitute one-third of the total population. Therefore, development of this segment is a priority agenda for the Government. The present government has undertaken various programs and projects for mainstreaming adolescents and youths in overall development process. Comprehensive initiatives have been undertaken for skill development of young people by providing extensive training in different sectors. A national Service Programme has been introduced. Around sixty thousand young men and women who have completed their secondary education and are still unemployed have been brought under this programme. They are being given preliminary training for three months and being posted to various departments of the Government at upazilla and district level for two years. During the period of two years of National Service they will be able to groom themselves as skilled workforce so as to get permanent job or work in future. They have to make a compulsory savings every month so that in future they can have some capital to start small scale business. Skill enhancement training programme for 7,36,600 youths, male and female, has been undertaken with a view to enhancing the capacity to access the domestic as well as overseas labour markets. At the same time, arrangements have been made to provide micro-credit on easy terms to encourage the trained youths to be self-employed

Mr. Chair:

It has been rightly pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General that adolescents and youth in the current world live in a society different from the world their parents lived in. In our part of the world, when I grew up, child marriage was pervasive. Years back, the Government of Bangladesh promulgated laws that set the minimum age at 18 years for a girl to get married. There is no denial of the fact that when girls have access to education, marriages tend to be delayed. Therefore, female education is a priority agenda for the government of Bangladesh. In spite of budgetary constraints, we are giving free schooling including free books to female students upto 12 grade. In addition, allowance is given to families for each of their female offspring to attend school and they are eligible to get this stipend as long as the female offspring remained unmarried. We have achieved gender parity in enrolment in primary education. In secondary education girls exceed boys. Stipend program for girls enhanced their enrolment. Due to increased social awareness and substantial increase in girl education, the incidents of child marriage is declining.

Mr. Chair:

Health is another priority sector for us. Health care services are being delivered through 18,000 community clinics in rural areas with each serving 6,000 thousand people including vulnerable women. Moreover, we are upgrading 59 district hospitals for emergency obstetric care and preparing them as Women Friendly Health Service Centers. We are also formulating a "National Action Plan" and an "Adolescent Reproductive Health Strategy" to increase awareness on reproductive matters and prevent adolescent pregnancies. In this regard, we have initiated measures to improve the adolescent health service standards to international levels in one third of our hospitals by 2015. Maternal mortality rate has been declined from 570 per 100,000 live births in 2005 to 194 per 100,000 in recent years. In this regard we deeply appreciate the support of the development partners and UN and international organizations who supported us in implementing a comprehensive initiative to improve the utilization of quality maternal and newborn health services. Cell phone and other technology are being used to disseminate health and other necessary information to young women in the grassroots level in the rural areas. As a result, the number of deliveries in public health facilities has increased and subsequently rate of maternal and child mortality has been declined.

Mr. Chair,

As the report of the Secretary-General indicated, in the area of family planning, there is huge unmet needs in many regions. The figure stands at 25% in Asia. However, in Bangladesh the unmet need is 17.6%. The Contraceptive Prevalence rate has increased from 55.8% in 2007 to 61.7% in 2010. Total Fertility Rate has decreased to 2.5% in 2010. The growth rate has decreased to 1.39%

Mr. Chair:

In spite of its resource constraints, the government of Bangladesh is committed to transform its youth force into efficient human resources. However, while we have made significant strides in our various initiatives for youth development, we have yet miles to go. Our country-led programme must be supported by the international community specially by our development partners. I would like to urge you all to reinforce our collective commitments towards developing the youth and adolescents.

Secondly, we fully agree with the recommendation of the Secretary-General that migration for education can bring tangible benefits beyond improvement of education attainment. Young migrant students may bridge the gaps between different societies and cultures.

Thirdly, we have to remember that while youth has huge potentials for developing a nation, the same force, when marginalized, excluded and frustrated may be a cause of social unrest, may take refuge in drugs and tobacco, may be victim to traffickers and be involved in terrorist activities. Young people from developing countries like Bangladesh views migration as a source of hope and opportunity. Restrictive immigration laws and migration regimes only add to their desperation. In this regard, we would appreciate the understanding and cooperation of destination countries in facilitating regular migration so that skilled young people are discouraged to go for irregular movements.

I thank you all.