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**BANGLADESH**

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**Statement by H.E. Ms. Ismat Jahan  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative  
Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations at the fifty-third session of  
the Commission on the Status of Women on  
agenda item 3: 'Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the  
twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000:  
gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century'**

***Priority theme: The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men,  
including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS***

**New York, 9 March 2009**

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Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh associates itself with the statements made by Sudan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Cuba on behalf of NAM. My intervention will flag some of the issues that we consider significant.

The equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women is critical to women's economic, social and political empowerment. Although the share of women in paid work has grown significantly in recent times, women continue to bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid work such as caregiving and domestic responsibilities. Stereotypic view of men as breadwinners and women as caregiver perpetuates this unequal sharing. As a consequence, the potential of women and girls for self-development, participation in labour market, decision and policy making, and in the public sphere are constrained.

In the context of HIV/AIDS, caregiving has become a major source of inequality since it is estimated that globally women and girls provide 90 percent of the care need generated by the illness. It has brought to the fore the need for increased involvement of all stakeholders in care work and the weaknesses and insufficiencies of public policies and institutes in this regard.

Concerted efforts are required to enhance the involvement of men and boys in household works and caregiving and thereby facilitate the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities for men and women. However, increased share of care responsibilities between men and women alone is not adequate to address the persisting challenges of caregiving in the society. This has to be complemented by an accessible and affordable sound public care service. Care work should be integrated into overall policy development. We have to conduct research and systematically collect sex- and age-disaggregated data to inform policymaking. Monitoring and evaluation of the national progress in sharing of responsibilities should be carried out by developing a uniform set of gender indicators.

It is encouraging to note in the Secretary-General's report the innovative initiatives taken by different countries to promote equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women. As a result, we have seen an increase in men's involvement in care work, particularly in parenting. These best practices have to be widely disseminated.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh has still a very low prevalence of HIV/AIDS among even the high risk groups. However, high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in other countries in the region makes us vulnerable. In view of the anticipated need to provide care and protection to the HIV/AIDS infected population, we are increasingly acknowledging the impact that HIV/AIDS epidemic is likely to have especially in the lives of girls and women's in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has formulated 'National Policy on HIV/AIDS and STD related issues' which has the provision of equal sharing of responsibilities of men and women particularly in caregiving. The Second National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS 2004-2010 seeks to fulfill Bangladesh's international obligations regarding HIV/AIDS. It recognizes that systems of care, which place the onus of care on households or communities, are not sustainable. We are conducting awareness raising campaigns and advocacy programmes with different stakeholders to dispel the stereotypes in this field.

Mr. Chairman,

Women and girls are likely to be the hardest hit by the unfolding global economic and financial crisis. Low-skilled export oriented industries and other female dominated sectors are already feeling the heat. With the increasing loss of jobs, reduced remittance, limited access to micro-credit and escalating food price, women now take on more burden than ever before to sustain their families and the community as a whole. Stimulus packages should, therefore, ensure that spending is gender equitable in job creation. We have to place more emphasis on gender budgeting; increase public investment in agriculture and social infrastructure; protect micro-credit sectors; and sustain aid flows to attenuate the impact of the crisis on women.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, it is worrisome to note that policy responses have not always been explicitly driven by the objective of reducing the unequal sharing of responsibilities between men and women. They are often focused on advancement of women in general. To reduce the care burden on women, the issue has to be addressed in a wider gender-equality framework through a multi-sectoral approach. The goal of equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women has to be pursued in tandem with the overall goals of gender equality and empowerment of women. In addition, there has to be greater international cooperation and a global partnership to assist the national efforts to achieve this goal.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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