



BANGLADESH

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Statement by

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at the forty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development
on agenda item 3(b): Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action
pertaining to the situation of social groups.

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Madam Chair, the Copenhagen commitments were the landmark recognition of social development as an integral part of the global development agenda. While the issue of social development is an all-encompassing phenomenon, addressing the situation of social groups particularly, the marginalized and disadvantaged ones namely, persons with disabilities, youth, older persons and family, merits special attention given the fact that they are the first casualties of any social or economic setback. In this context, I would like to highlight the situation of these social groups from our national perspective.

Madam Chair, the issue of disability is increasingly making its place on the global development agenda, and rightly so. The rapid entry into force of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the manifestation of international community's resolve and goodwill to uphold the cause of persons with disabilities. From this perspective, my government's actions and activities pertaining to disability are being realigned to fully reflect the provisions of the Convention. We have been unrelenting in our pursuit of mainstreaming the disability issue in the national development agenda. In addition, we are introducing a paradigm shift at our national level by addressing the issue of disability from a rights-based approach rather than the traditional medical and paternalistic approach. The civil society and NGOs are playing a laudable role in complementing the government's efforts.

We are conducting awareness-raising programmes to change perceptions, remove stereotypes and create readiness at all levels of the society to accept persons with disabilities without any prejudice. The government has been increasing the disability allowance every year and also the number of beneficiaries. We hosted the Third General Assembly and Conference of the Asia Pacific Disability Forum last year in Dhaka. This was an important occasion for us to re-strengthen our partnership at regional level. Election of an expert from Bangladesh to the twelve-member Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the recognition of our contribution in this sector.

Madam Chair, youth holds the best prospect for any nation. So, the endless potential of the youth has to be tapped. We need to provide them with proper guidance to bring out the best in them. It is also critically important to develop their leadership skill. Our National Youth Policy, adopted in fulfillment of our commitment to the World Programme of Action for the Youth, has been designed to transform our youth into an organized, disciplined and productive force by providing skill development and motivational training for their gainful employment. The aim is to empower the youth and involve them in the mainstream of the national development and decision-making process while maintaining gender balance and ensuring non-discrimination.

We have launched strong campaign among the youth to raise their awareness against all sorts of anti-social and immoral activities including drug abuse, sexually transmitted diseases particularly HIV/AIDS. The government is patronizing voluntary youth bodies to organize and motivate the youth to engage in community development activities. To ensure access to uninterrupted flow of information and to enable the youth to take benefits of the opportunities that ICT offer, the government is planning to expand ICT facilities by setting up information and research centres for the youth.

Madam Chair, it is important to draw the critical link between ageing and development to recognize the contribution people make to socio-economic development as they age. The human potential of older persons needs to be nurtured and developed. To achieve tangible success on the issue of ageing, it is important to mainstream the concerns of older persons into the relevant policies at the national level. Active ageing policies can be useful in order to keep the elderly people in the labour force according to their capacities and preferences. We see value in the 'strategic implementation framework' on ageing, as set out in the Secretary-General's report since we believe it would help member states build their national capacity on ageing. We would also give due consideration to the recommendations contained in the report.

Elderly people are one of the important segments of beneficiaries of our poverty reduction activities. The government has also given much importance on the issue of achieving secured ageing through poverty reduction and empowerment of elderly people. We have introduced targeted programmes for the aged population in line with Madrid commitments. Particularly the Old Age Allowance programme and various pension schemes are having a positive impact on the recipients, their families and also on the society as a whole. We are conducting advocacy programmes to enhance social consciousness about the responsibility towards elderly people.

Madam Chair, intergenerational cohesion generates positive outcomes in families. We agree with the observation in the Secretary-General's report that demographic shifts and changes in family structures have created new challenges for intergenerational cohesion. The international community has to take up the issue of family more seriously as well as develop and implement policies to address these manifold challenges facing families.

Kinship, social and familial ties and values are hallmarks of Bangladesh society. We are also committed to maintain the integrity and identity of family. The government has taken up some family based welfare projects which establish family as a unit of development activities. Bangladesh also supports the relevant international and UN initiatives pertaining to family issues.

Madam Chair, the poor and the vulnerable have been the hardest hit by the current global crises. Moreover, social measures aimed at promoting social development or targeting certain vulnerable social groups would also fall victim to these crises. Unless we manage to ameliorate the situation of these vulnerable groups, the goal of social development would remain elusive. Alongside national efforts, international cooperation in protecting them from the economic meltdown is seen to be as important particularly for the developing countries. This session of the Commission, being held just in the wake of the crises, gives us the best opportunity to make an assessment of the impact of the global crises on social development. Let us make the best use of the deliberations of this forum and come up with some policy guidance for making substantive contribution to the impending global socio-economic bail-out policy discourse.

I thank you.
