

**Bangladesh – Initial Report on the Optional Protocol on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict**

**Bangladesh Statement**

Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2006

Madam Chair and Distinguished Members,

*I am making this statement on behalf of my Ambassador. As my Ambassador had a prior commitment in the WTO, as Chair of a Dispute Settlement Panel, he deeply regrets that he is unable to be present. However, he has asked me to read out the following statement, on his behalf.*

Let me begin by expressing our Best Wishes for a Happy New Year to the Distinguished Members of the Committee, to the Secretary and to all others present.

We, in Bangladesh, hold the Committee and its Members in the highest esteem, and greatly value their comments and suggestions. In our view, the Committee holds a very important role in promoting the purposes and principles of the Convention, and protecting the rights of the child. Bangladesh reiterates its support and cooperation to the Committee, in its activities and deliberations.

Bangladesh is privileged to be among the first countries whose report is being considered. We think that this is befitting. Bangladesh was among the first fourteen to have signed and ratified this Optional Protocol in September 2002.

The issue of Child Rights has always received the highest level of political support in Bangladesh. In May 2002, our Prime Minister attended the Special Session on Children in New York. At this session, the Prime Minister highlighted the numerous initiatives and programs that the Government has undertaken to ensure Child Welfare, as well as protection of Child Rights. We are committed to the well-being of the children of today, who will create our future tomorrow.

Madam Chair,

We live in a society where the weakest segments are vulnerable to exposure, neglect and abuse. Children do fall in this category. We are deeply

conscious of this, and make every effort to help the vulnerable, affected and neglected children. This is a task we take very seriously, despite our scarce human and financial resources. On account of this principled commitment, we have ratified the CRC and the Two Optional Protocols. Furthermore, we have undertaken comprehensive reforms within the area of Children and Youth, especially focusing on the three aspects of Human Security that is dignity, survival and livelihood. .

The UNSG's Report of February 2005, on Children and Armed Conflict, outlining an Action Plan to establish a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism is a good initiative. The UNSG, in the same Report, calls upon States to combat illicit cross-border activities harmful to children through the development of bilateral, multilateral and regional arrangements.

Within the South Asian region, we have increased cooperation at the regional level. Bangladesh has ratified the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children, the SAARC Convention on Child Welfare, and the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements on the Protection of Child Welfare in South Asia. During the 13<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit in Dhaka, in November 2005, our Prime Minister called upon the SAARC Member countries to under take a review of the progress in realizing the objectives of the SAARC Decade on the Rights of the Child (2001-2010). At the national plane, we have ratified ILO Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child labor (1999) and ILO Convention 29 concerning Forced or Compulsory Labor.

In an effort to prevent further acts of hostilities, conflict and violence we have joined global efforts to promote a culture of peace. Our participation in the UNPKO stems from the principles outlined in our constitution that we would base our international relations on the principles outlined in the charter of the UN and shall strive for the renunciation of the use of force and strive for general and complete disarmament. *The UNSG has said that Bangladesh is a model member of the UN providing leadership among the least developed countries and other forums and contributing substantially to Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Operations*

One important component of the Protocol is International Cooperation and assistance. The international community is yet to provide appropriate technical

and financial assistance in capacity building in this field, particularly on those elements that would be appropriate to the country context.

Madam Chair

Within the country, we are committed to a process of consultation with all stakeholders, and greatly value their suggestions. Before submitting the Report on the Implementation of the Optional Protocol on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, opinions and viewpoints were sought from numerous stakeholders, including civil society actors. The Report you see reflects a collaborative effort.

Based on the principles and spirit of the Optional Protocol, we have taken measures to ensure that members of the armed forces under age 18, who would actually be on training, do not take direct part in combat. There is no conscription, compulsion or coercion for entering the armed forces, nor is there compulsory military training. Anyone who joins our armed forces does so out his/her own free will.

Finally, in response to the procedure laid out for this Committee's work, we have submitted written responses to the questions put to us. We do not have experts in this subject in our Mission, but would be happy to try to respond to any question that you may have.

I thank you.