

**Statement by the Ms. Rokeya Sultana, Secretary**

**Ministry of Women and Children Affairs**

**Government of Bangladesh**

(3 JUNE, 2002)

Madame Chairperson,

Distinguished members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Bangladesh, I feel honoured to present the third and fourth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Committee for its constructive guidance in the process of implementing the CRC. Our submission is contained in the two Reports. We have also furnished responses to some subsequent questions. I shall be making some general comments at this stage. We shall be happy to respond to any question from the floor later.

But before I proceed further, please allow me to introduce the members of my delegation. I have here with me,

Mr. Md. Mustafizur Rahman, Charges des Affaires, Bangladesh Permanent Mission, Geneva

Mr. Nurun Nabi Talukder, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs

Mr. Nazmul Islam, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Finance

Mr. Nurul Amin, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare

Ms. Laila Jesmine, Deputy Secretary Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

Mr. Hafizuddin, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

Madame Chairperson,

Bangladesh has had a peaceful transition to democratic rule through free, fair and impartial elections held in December 2008. The new Government has laid out a "Vision 2021" to build a poverty-free, digital Bangladesh to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our independence. We envisage the full protection and promotion of human rights for all our citizens, especially children.

In compliance with our Constitutional obligations, Bangladesh became one of the first few countries to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite our genuine constraints, we have made considerable progress in our efforts to fully implement the Convention. We are striving to create an enabling environment for the full realization and enjoyment of the rights of children as enshrined in the Convention. The Third and Fourth Reports submitted to the Committee reflect some of our achievements.

I should underline that, as the lead agency, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs prepared these reports in consultation with all stakeholders, including children. Along with the relevant Government agencies, our non-government and civil society organizations as well as media play an important role in ensuring child rights. These rights relate to a broad range of issues, including child survival, development, protection and participation.

In terms of our institutional arrangement, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is responsible for coordinating targeted interventions for children's rights and welfare. National Children's Council is the highest policy-level body to monitor enforcement of child related laws and rights. The inter-Ministerial CRC Committee coordinates implementation of CRC and the National Plan of

Action on Children. Bangladesh Children's Academy develops and implements projects on cultural and psychological development of children.

Bangladesh had prepared three National Plans of Action to fulfil its national and international obligations on child rights. We are currently implementing the Third National Plan of Action (2005-2010) for Children. The NPA process has facilitated greater awareness about children's rights, especially in mainstreaming these issues into national development programmes. The current NPA incorporated the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were explicitly linked with the Global Plan of Action endorsed by the United Nations Special Session on Children in 1992.

Madame Chairperson,

Bangladesh is well poised to achieve most of the MDGs. We have already attained significantly high rate of enrolment in primary and secondary schools. Gender disparity in enrolment has also been effectively addressed. We have made big strides in reducing infant and under-five mortality rates, drawing strength from universal immunization, salt iodization and Vitamin-A supplementation coverage. Safe drinking water is available to the majority of our population. The Government is committed to ensuring sanitation for all by 2013.

Our Government attaches the highest priority to education. Some 15 per cent of our development budget is allocated for the education sector of which 64 per cent is earmarked for primary education. The government has made primary education free and compulsory for all children, and provides free education for girls up to class XII, free books for all children at primary level and stipend for

girls in rural secondary schools. The Government ran a Food-for-Education Programme for poor primary school children in rural areas. This has now been replaced by cash assistance to the poor families for sending their children to school.

The Government has adopted the Primary Education Development Programme in a coordinated, holistic and sector-based fashion. The Government is also implementing a project entitled "Reaching Out-of-School Children" for ensuring primary education for nearly 5,00,000 out-of-school children between 7 - 14 years of age in 60 disadvantaged sub-districts. The running of non-formal education, mostly by NGOs, offers an alternative channel of education to those who cannot avail of formal education.

The Government's immediate objectives are to address the issue of school dropouts, enhance the quality of education and introduce a unified education system at the primary level. The Government would like to take up a large-scale feeding programme to reverse the trend of school drop-outs. We hope that our development partners would come forward to strengthen our efforts in this regard. The Government has plans to progressively make education free up to the tertiary level.

Madame Chairperson,

We have taken up a number of programs to provide adequate services for children in need of protection. The Government attaches high priority to combating sexual abuse and exploitation of children, deprivation of liberty, early marriage and lack of birth registration.

The Government adopted a *National Plan of Action against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children including Trafficking* in 2002. An Implementation and Monitoring Committee coordinates and monitors the implementation of this Plan. With support from development partners, a community based child protection mechanism is being tested. There are provisions for subsistence allowance for rehabilitating orphaned children, with focus on child victims of natural disasters.

In the area of juvenile justice, the minimum age of criminal responsibility was increased to nine years from seven in 2004. With a view to harmonising national laws on juvenile justice with CRC, the Government drafted the *National Social Policy on Alternative Models of Care and Protection for Children in Contact with Law*. A National Task Force is working to release children from prison and monitor the situation at the district and sub-district levels.

The Government is working to achieve 100% birth registration by 2011 and has made considerable progress to this effect. From 7% in 2003, the estimated figure has crossed 50% by the end of 2008.

The Government is committed to gradually eliminating child labour in all sectors. Bangladesh has eliminated child labor from the country's largest industrial sector i.e. Ready Made Garments sector. The Government has finalized the National Child Labour Policy in consultation with all stakeholders, including development partners, non-government and civil society organisations, parents and employers. In pursuance of the ratification of the ILO Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the Government has embarked on a Time Bound Programme, addressing the root causes of child labour, promoting basic education and linking national

development efforts to actions against child labour.

The National Human Rights Commission was established last year with the mandate to receive and investigate allegation of human rights violations as well as to monitor overall human rights situation. This will further strengthen the existing legal and institutional mechanisms to safeguard child rights. The government is also undertaking a number of legal and policy reform measures in favour of children. With the recent amendment of the Citizenship Act, children born of a Bangladeshi woman married to a non-Bangladeshi is now entitled to Bangladeshi citizenship.

Children are becoming more and more involved in Government's policy formulation and decision making process. Children's opinions were invited in the formulation of the National Child Labour Policy and the National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children. Participation of children is encouraged and ensured through different national programmes, such as the observance of the Child Rights Week, Child Labor Day and International Children's Day.

In order to realize child rights, Government budgetary allocation has been significantly increased over the years. The Government has allocated substantial resources for the expansion of education, health, nutrition and social welfare sectors. More than 20% of total Government expenditure has been allocated to the social sectors since 1990, which is more than 3 per cent of the GDP. made in the National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II ( FY 2009-2011) makes indicative budgetary allocations to the tune of Tk 0.46 billion for children's advancement and child rights. Moreover, Tk. 203.93 billion was made available for the social protection sector (e.g. safety nets for poverty reduction, food security, disaster management, scaling-up of micro credit for poverty

+41 22 738 46 16 7

reduction and rural non-farm activities etc.). These programmes will be benefiting a large number of children through out the country.

Madame Chairperson,

We sincerely acknowledge, that despite all the progress, we have yet go a long way towards ensuring the full realization of all the rights of children in Bangladesh. There are many challenges. These challenges require our immediate action, but we need to be realistic in our expectations. These challenges are multifaceted and are surrounded by sensitivities and traditions, which can only be changed over a stretch of time. However, we are confident of our strength and potentials, and are taking immediate as well as long-term actions to improve children's rights. We believe that ensuring the overall socio-economic development of our people is the biggest guarantee to their full enjoyment of human rights. The international community has a critical role to play in strengthening our development efforts.

Once again, I am glad that my colleagues and I will have the opportunity to benefit from your observations and recommendations to bolster our efforts to further improve the child rights situation in Bangladesh.

I thank you all and look forward to a constructive discussion.

I thank you, Madame Chairperson.

+41 22 738 46 16

1/7



*Permanent Mission of Bangladesh*  
*65 Rue de Lausanne, 1202 Geneva,*  
*tel : 022-906-8020, fax : 022-738-4616*  
*email : mission.bangladesh@ties.itu.int*

**FAX MESSAGE**

To: Ms. Maja Andrijasevic-Boko Secretary Committee on the Rights of the Child, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Palais Wilson, Geneva	From: Abu Bakr Molla Permanent Mission of Bangladesh, Geneva  <i>Abu Bakr Molla</i> <i>5/6/09</i>
Fax No. 022-917 90 29, Tel. No. 022-917 92 16	Fax No: 022-738 46 16 Tel. No: 022-906 80 20,
Date: 05 June 2009	No. of 1 + 7 pages:
Subject: Copy of the opening statement made by Bangladesh delegation at CRC on 3.5.09	

Respected Madam,

Kindly refer to your request on the above subject. I am faxing you copy of the opening statement made by Ms. Rokeya Sultana, Leader of Bangladesh delegation on 3.5.2009.

Kindly acknowledge receipt.

Respectful regards.