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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: rethinking and strengthening social
development in the contemporary world**

Statement submitted by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Inclusive social development policy for sustainable development towards equality and justice

The United Nations, as a part of its effort towards the progress and development of mankind is revisiting the different dimensions of its strategies including social development considering the needs of the contemporary world. As a result of the efforts made in the last five decades, significant progress and development has been experienced by different parts of the world. The proportion of people living in extreme poverty has been reduced to half. More significantly, a sustained and vibrant global women's movement, succeeded to include and focus on gender equality and women's rights issues, in international, regional and national development agendas from both a rights based and welfare approach.

Global experiences (including the experience of the women's movement) and an in-depth review of different development policies such as the, Millennium Development Goals, Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (UNCEDAW), reveals that, many achievements, the agenda's and prescribed tasks are still unfinished. There are so many existing and emerging challenges, that still need to be properly addressed.

National policies and programs are addressing gender issues in light of the principles of UNCEDAW. Affirmative measures have been taken to include women and girls more in development agendas. The role of women is more visible in the mainstream socioeconomic and political arena. Women are contributing to social development and economic growth, and thus playing a significant role in poverty alleviation. Defying concepts about their traditional role, women are more visible in job markets, politics and leadership roles.

Exclusion and uneven development is a major challenge. Different groups are marginalized and excluded as a result of customs, religion, geographical location, culture, disability and socioeconomic status. Diversity is often not properly considered in the total development process. Embracing all will strengthen social development policy.

Diverse voices are often not heard by society and policymakers; they are not adequately represented in parliament, local government, public office or other decision-making positions.

Despite significant progress in the area of universal primary education, quality education is an area of concern. The content of existing educational curricula and their systems of implementation are not resulting in the development of positive attitudes towards human rights, gender sensitivity, productive employment or decent work.

Although the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development focused on and highlighted the integration of women's reproductive health rights with development process, this issue is still a big challenge for women's development, empowerment, personal freedom and choice. The violation of reproductive health rights exists throughout a women's total life cycle, through child marriage, force marriage, early pregnancy, frequent and multiple pregnancies,

rape and forced pregnancy, and lack of access to proper information, which is major impediment to development.

Patriarchy should also be addressed when rethinking social development policy and sustainable development. The whole development process is trapped in a vicious cycle of patriarchy. Substantive efforts must be made so that society, policymakers, legislators, and implementers change their patriarchal attitudes. Changing the prevailing degrading discrimination towards women is vital; women must be empowered and treated equally with dignity in their family, society and the state. Women must be considered human being within the family and women's rights must be upheld in accordance with UNCEDAW, BPFA and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Women's rights are not properly conceptualized in the society and state.

In a patriarchal society, violence against women and girls is a common phenomenon. In spite of laws [like a domestic violence act or acts against women and child repression], and a multidimensional effort by women's organization, human rights organizations, development organizations and the government. Violence against women and girls is still increasing at an alarming rate. The culture of violence against women and girls is a major challenge and impediment for the development of not only women and girls but the whole society. Violence against women and girls must be considered as zero tolerance issue, as it violates human rights and affects the development cycle.

Rights of the girl child should be promoted and protected through programmes, policies and laws. For sustainable development, investment in women and girls must be ensured. A gender responsive budget will contribute to social development if properly planned and implemented.

Recommendations:

Social development policies should be all-inclusive. Women from different sectors — particularly marginalized, disadvantaged, religious and ethnic minorities — must not be excluded according to any logic or argument or attitude, but be included throughout development process.

Women of all strata must be more effectively included in consultation process for developing more effective policies and programmes.

All citizens should be treated equally under the law and in practice.

Rights of all citizens should promoted and protected by uniform laws as per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Justice for all should be ensured through attitudinal change, proper implementation of law and good governance.

Access to quality education for girls and women must be modernized and, inclusive through revisiting the educational system, policy and curriculum so that they became gender and human rights sensitive. This will enable women to enter a competitive and decent job market and can lead to a life with dignity.

Training and opportunities for decent work must be provided. Discrimination from equal pays for equal work must be removed.

Women's health rights (including the right to reproductive health) must be addressed as a cross-cutting issue and included in different national development policies and progress for sustainable development. This is so that they can lead a quality life and make decision for themselves.

Equal rights to property and resources must be legally ensured.

The rights to control income and resources must be protected through the law.

A gender responsive global and national fiscal and financial management policy must be adopted and followed. A gender responsive budget already in place needs more effective intervention.

A zero tolerance policy prohibiting violence against women and girls should be adopted and implement, ensuring accountability

Efforts to change patriarchy must be made through education, practice culture, legislation and media campaigns.

A uniform family code should be enacted and implemented.

Legislation to protect rights of girls must be enacted (regarding education and training, reproductive health, safety and security, property and resources, investment and, freedom of choice).

A safety net policy must be designed to include women's empowerment.

The attitude of families towards gender equality and, women's right must be addressed in social development policy with community engagement in policy formulation and implementation.

Measures should be taken so that women's voice can be heard everywhere and in phase of decision-making processes, through meaningful participation including direct election in the reserved seats in the parliament.

Consider the 1993 Vienna Declaration slogans, "Women rights are human rights and violence against women is violation against humanity" in social and sustainable policies.

UNCEDAW should be ratified and implemented by all States, with articles incorporated in legal and social development policy.

With the meaningful participation of women in every sphere we will make development sustainable.
