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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the special session of the General Assembly entitled
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace
for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic
objectives and action in critical areas of concern and
further actions and initiatives**

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.



Statement

Since its inception in 1970, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad has been working for gender equality and empowerment to establish a democratic, equity-based secular society. Its objectives include promoting an equality-based, gender-sensitized family, society and State, peace and democracy, women's development and economic empowerment and women's participation in the political process; resisting violence against women; eliminating gender discrimination; alleviating poverty; etc. It is a non-profit, voluntary, mass-based, participatory, non-partisan, dynamic, transparent, committed, sustainable, networking and equality-based women's human rights organization.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad has multidimensional activities to promote and protect women's human rights in Bangladesh, empower women, and end discrimination and gender disparity. It is working for empowering women economically, politically and socially and for resisting violence against women. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad believes in the inclusion of men in the women's movement, especially with respect to resisting violence against women and mainstreaming women in the economic development process through gender budgeting. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad is doing advocacy and lobbying work on the national budget for the sixth five-year development plan, including for national policies on education, health, agriculture, science and technology, etc. It is addressing the reproductive rights of women and health, working for the elimination of existing patriarchal attitudes in multidimensional ways, including through its own programmes, the media, etc.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad focuses on resisting violence against women, follows a rights-based approach and conducts service-oriented programmes. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad provides legal aid to victims of violence against women in multidimensional ways.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad is a pioneer in the law reform movement in the country and has been engaged in the implementation process. It demands proper implementation of existing laws and domestication of laws in the light of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad has contributed to all the laws enacted in the interest of women since the country's independence, including the Dowry Prohibition Act 1980, the Family Court Ordinance 1985, the Nari-O-Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain (Prevention of Oppression against Women and Children Act) 2000, the Nari-O-Shishu Nirjatan Daman (Amendment) Act 2003, the Bangladesh Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2009, the DNA Act 2010, the Domestic Violence (Deterrence and Protection) Act 2010, the Hindu Marriage Registration Act 2012, the High Court Division's directives against sexual harassment in 2009, the Appellate Division's judgement against extrajudicial punishment in the name of fatwa in 2011, and also submitted the draft Sexual Harassment Prevention Act 2010. In the 1980s, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad started the movement for a Uniform Family Code, published it in 1993 and submitted it to the Government in 1993. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad is still undertaking advocacy and lobbying for the enactment of laws to prevent illegal fatwa and sexual harassment and to enact uniform family laws.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad provides counselling, mediation services and medico-legal support and runs a shelter home called Rokeya Sadan for victims, among other activities. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad resolves family disputes through mediation and has recovered a considerable sum in dowry money and

maintenance. A temporary shelter plays a significant role in supporting the victims of violence against women. The primary purpose is to ensure their safety and to rehabilitate girls. It conducts deputations and submits memorandums on incidents of violence against women to concerned administrative and law enforcement authorities so that they may take the necessary steps to ensure justice. It is trying to give adequate and quality services to victims of violence through its rural and urban branches.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad organizes dialogue and consultation meetings with service providers and service recipients and provides legal and paralegal training. It is conducting training for policymakers, administrative personnel and law enforcement officials. Central and district branches organize consultations and workshops throughout the country with the participation of students and teachers of schools, colleges and universities and young boys and girls with a view to creating awareness about and to playing an active role in resisting violence against women.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad maintains strong networks and collaboration with various local, national and international organizations. Since 2009, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad has been a partner organization of the Ministry of Home Affairs in supporting Victim Support Centres; this is an outstanding example of governmental-non-governmental organization collaboration.

Political empowerment and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad functions as an effective lobbying and advocacy agent for women in Bangladesh. Political empowerment of women is important in Bangladesh Mahila Parishad's programmes and activities, which follow a multidimensional approach to advance the political participation and representation of women for democracy and good governance in Bangladesh. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad works to incorporate women's issues in political party declarations and programmes; elect women as at least one third of the total members at all levels of political parties and to one third of the reserved seats; and for the direct election of women to the National Parliament. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad has already submitted a bill on mainstreaming women to Parliament and Union Parishads (Councils).

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad has long worked towards the implementation of the National Women Development Policy, 2011 and its action plan.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad is acting as the initiator and secretariat of the Social Action Committee, a forum of 67 organizations. The Social Action Committee is working to create awareness regarding women's rights and women's empowerment; resisting violence against women; and jointly drafting recommendations and policy suggestions to submit to Governments.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad has considered the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as a tool for the women's movement since the 1980s. For the first time, in 1984 it translated the Convention into Bengali and disseminated it to the people. The organization undertook massive programmes and activities throughout the country to raise awareness, to conduct training, and to organize meetings and advocacy events about full ratification of the Convention and its implementation. In 2011 an alternative report, drafted by 35 organizations from Bangladesh, was submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The President of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad joined the representatives of other organizations at the session of the Committee at which the

report of Bangladesh was examined. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad has introduced a certificate course on gender, women's empowerment and development.

The universal periodic review and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad has been actively participating in universal periodic review activities since 2008. It actively participated in preparing the stakeholders' report for the universal periodic review concerning Bangladesh for 2009 and also for 2013. It has actively participated in and given recommendations for the preparation of the universal periodic review reports of the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh and also of the Government.

Commission on the Status of Women and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad attends all the programmes of the Commission on the Status of Women and participates in the thematic issues in the light of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

UN-Women and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad

The Bangladesh Chapter of UN-Women has been established and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad's President is working with its advisory committee.

Challenges:

- High prevalence of violence against women
- Violations of women's human rights
- Prevailing patriarchal attitudes
- Lack of education and awareness
- Lack of good governance
- Lengthy, complicated judicial process
- Culture of impunity
- Lack of political will
- Ineffective, weak and underrepresentation of women in Parliament and public offices
- Delay in implementation of approved policy
- Political strategy compromising women's human rights
- Lack of a democratic culture
- Weak parliamentary government
- Lack of supportive parliamentary attitudes
- Lack of accountability and transparency of public representatives and lawmakers
- Prevailing confrontational politics and political culture
- Use of religion in politics