

Delegation from the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Position Paper for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Although today there is bigger awareness for the situation of women than decades ago gender equality is far from being reached. For instance, the global community will need 170 years to close only the economic gender gap with the current rates of progress. Gender equality and the empowerment of women is also a key factor in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) formulated in *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015) and in building inclusive societies for the future. Therefore, the People's Republic of Bangladesh appreciated the establishment of the new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) by combining four formerly separate UN agencies in 2010. The People's Republic of Bangladesh is honoured to represent Asia in the Executive Board and looks forward to discussing the topics on the agenda with the Member States.

I. Eliminating Child, Early, and Forced Marriage by 2030

Recent reports of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) show that child, early, and forced marriages (CEFM) remain a big problem. Worldwide one in every five girls is married off before her eighteenth birthday. According to Girls not Brides, a global partnership of more than 1000 civil society organizations, the total number of girls married off as children could amount to 1.2 billion by 2050. Most urgent is the situation in developing countries, where according to UNFPA about 40% of all girls are married off before the age of 18. Victims of forced marriage, that is "a marriage that takes place without the free or valid consent of one or both of the partners", are also mostly girls. CEFM can be seen not only as violation of human rights but also affect the educational and employment prospects of its victims.

The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) adopted by the General Assembly (GA) in 1979 explicates in Article 16 (b) that women shall have the same right "freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent". Furthermore, it urges all Member States to eliminate all discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations. SDG 5.3 focuses on eliminating all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage. The *Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage*, jointly conducted by UN-Women, UNICEF and UNFPA since 2016, aims at highlighting the conditions that lead to child marriage and provides financial, physical, and emotional support for girls that are at risk of CEFM.

Additional to the work of the United Nations regional initiatives need more support by the international community. The People's Republic of Bangladesh suggests to join the programmes of UN-entities and regional partners like the African Union (AU) in order to use synergetic effects and to better co-ordinate the allocation of financial and physical support. Furthermore, UN-Women should support Member States to formulate national laws and policies that aim at implementing the conventions and declarations in question.

II. Supporting the Involvement of Women in Governance and Decision-Making

Although women make up more than half of the world's population, they are hopelessly underrepresented in political institutions. Although there has been an increase of 11.5% in women's representation in national parliaments from 1995 to 2016, by 2016 only 22.8% of all national parliamentarians worldwide were women. By 2017 only 12 women worldwide were serving as a Head of Government, one of them being Prime Minister of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina Wazed.

CEDAW (1979), Article 7 urges all Member States to ensure to women the right "to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies." SDG 5, Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, and SDG 10, Reduce inequality within and among countries, outline the importance of female participation in decision-making for a fair and sustainable development.

As the empowerment of women is highly connected to their economic and social integration in their societies the People's Republic of Bangladesh demands to strongly foster the partnerships of UN-Women with non-governmental initiatives like the HeForShe campaign. UN-Women should help the

Member States to examine progress made in the national implementation of all 17 SDGs in terms of whether it considers the empowerment of women. In addition Member States should mandate further research on the interlinkages of the economic and social SDGs to better understand the connection between political participation and economic and social emancipation.