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**NATIONAL REPORT SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 15 (A)
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Bangladesh

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I. COUNTRY CONTEXT

1. Bangladesh is a multi-party pluralistic democracy with a unitary form of Government and a unicameral Parliament represented by 300 directly elected members. In addition to these 300 seats, 45 seats are reserved for women to be filled on the basis of election by proportional representation from amongst the parties represented in Parliament. Since 1991, successive parliamentary elections have been taking place under a non-party Caretaker Government which ensures a peaceful transfer of power through holding free, fair and credible elections.
2. The idea of a neutral Caretaker Government emerged in response to demand for a peaceful means of changing government through holding an impartial election. At the end of the term of a parliamentary government, the responsibility is transferred to a non-partisan Caretaker Government (CTG) composed of a Chief Adviser¹ and a prescribed number of advisers². The last Caretaker Government assumed responsibility on 12 January 2007 when the President declared a state of emergency in the wake of political agitations.
3. After assuming power, the CTG undertook a host of institutional reform initiatives that included, among others, separation of the judiciary from the executive; reconstitution of the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Election Commission making them functionally independent of the government; establishment of the National Human Rights Commission; and de-politicisation of the civil and police administration. These reform initiatives, which have a direct bearing on good governance, human rights and development, were in the planning process for years. These have been translated into action during the tenure of this CTG. A new governance paradigm has now emerged in Bangladesh that sought to strengthen democratic framework of the country in order to ensure that it is free from the scourge of corruption, discrimination and exploitation. Most significantly, the civil society and the NGOs have been active partners of the CTG in these reform initiatives in a way that has never been witnessed in Bangladesh before.
4. Bangladesh, by adhering to the values of pluralism, democracy, good governance, human rights, gender justice and women's empowerment, has brought significant societal transformation over the last decades. These efforts made Bangladesh a success-story in poverty alleviation. Implementation of pragmatic policies and strategic reforms in the areas of economic growth, population control, women's empowerment, food self-sufficiency, reduced dependence on aid, promotion of NGOs, democratic electoral process, and above all, a vibrant civil society have helped Bangladesh secure a place amongst countries that have achieved medium human development.
5. In its strive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Bangladesh has been successful in attaining a significantly high net enrolment rate of children in primary school and secondary school, and in removing gender disparity in enrolment. Child immunisation programmes have extended their reach to 87.2 per cent of the population in 2006. Maternal, infant and under-five children mortality rates have reduced significantly, and there is an upward trend in average life expectancy. Bangladesh is also on track in achieving the other MDGs.
6. Notwithstanding encouraging advances in human development, poverty continues to be a critical area of concern for the nation. About 40 percent of Bangladesh's population is poor³. This, combined with the fact that Bangladesh is traditionally disaster-prone, which has witnessed an increased frequency due largely to greenhouse gas emission-induced climate change, has been a major challenge to its human rights and development initiatives. The poor people are generally unable to challenge inequities and enjoy their rights in full on account of their low economic

¹ The Chief Adviser holds the status of Prime Minister.

² Advisers holds the status of ministers.

³ 2005, source: *Household Expenditure Survey*.

standing. Economic condition being one of the major root causes of violation and unfulfilment of many fundamental and human rights, Bangladesh has adopted holistic and multi-pronged approaches aimed at alleviating human poverty on the one hand and ensuring human rights of its citizens, on the other.

II. METHODOLOGY

7. The UPR was prepared in consultation with civil society groups, NGOs⁴, government ministries and agencies. Apart from drawing upon written in-puts from concerned actors and interviews with key informants both within and outside the government, review of selected human rights documents were undertaken, where necessary, to supplement the material furnished and make an informed assessment of the human rights scenario.

III. LEGAL AND JUDICIAL FRAMEWORK

8. The Constitution of Bangladesh is the supreme law of the country. Executive authorities or statutory bodies cannot make any law as such, but can make by-laws to the extent authorised by the legislature. Referred to as Rules and Regulations, these type of subordinate legislations are enforceable in court, unless found ultra vires the parent law.

9. Rule of law is one of the basic features of the legal system of Bangladesh. Although the system is founded on English Common Law, most of the laws are statutory laws that are enacted by the legislature and interpreted by the higher courts. The Supreme Court of Bangladesh, comprising the High Court and Appellate Divisions, has the jurisdiction both to interpret laws passed by the Parliament and to declare them null and void when found infringing on the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The High Court Division is vested with the power to hear appeals and revisions from subordinate courts, and to give orders and directives by way of writs to enforce the rights envisaged in the Constitution. It is also entitled to grant other remedies available under the writ jurisdiction. The Appellate Division has the power to hear appeals against decisions of the High Court Division or any other statutory body.

10. Claims regarding money, property, compensation etc. are to be filed before civil courts presided over by Assistant Judge or Additional District Judge according to the value of the claim. Complaints against commission of crimes are to be filed either at a local police station or in criminal court presided over by Magistrate. Besides, there are labour courts and labour appellate tribunals to settle labour disputes.

11. There are special judges to try corruption cases against public officials. Special tribunals have been established for trying offences committed against women and children, including acid violence. Election disputes are dealt with by election tribunals comprising judicial officers. Family matters are decided by Assistant Judges in family courts. Village courts in the rural areas and municipal conciliation boards in the urban areas are empowered to decide civil and criminal cases of petty nature. Offences committed by members of the Armed Forces are tried in military courts.

12. Attorney General is the principal law officer of the Government, assisted by a team of additional, deputy and assistant attorney generals. They represent the State in the Supreme Court. The Government Pleader, assisted by additional and assistant government pleaders, represents the State in the subordinate civil courts in the districts and conducts civil suits. The Public Prosecutor and assistant prosecutors represent the state in criminal matters in the courts of sessions, other sessions-level courts or tribunals in the district. Police officers conduct prosecution cases on behalf

⁴ Please see annex for the list of non-governmental organizations and civil society consulted.

of the State in magistrate courts. Law and order in the country are maintained by the police administration under direct control of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

IV. NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

13. The fundamental rights envisaged in the Constitution of Bangladesh reflect the human rights prescribed by international human rights law. Amongst the rights enumerated in the Constitution, the rights to equality before law⁵ and equal protection of law are of particular significance⁶. Moreover, discrimination on grounds of race, religion, caste or sex is prohibited, and none can be detrimentally affected in respect of life, liberty, body, reputation or property. The Constitution also ensures equality of opportunity in public employment.

14. The Constitution also sets out the fundamental principles of state policy which require the State to ensure, inter alia, women's participation in national life, free and compulsory education, public health, equality of opportunity, work as a right and duty, rural development and promotion of local government institutions, and respect for international law. The Supreme Court has, on a number of occasions, upheld these fundamental principles in protecting economic and social rights of citizens.

15. The seriousness with which Bangladesh regards the issue of human rights promotion and protection is manifest in its accession to or ratification of almost all the key international human rights instruments. They include:

- (a) International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965;
- (b) International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid 1973;
- (c) Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979 and its Optional Protocol 2000;
- (d) Slavery Convention 1926 and the Protocol amending the Slavery Convention 1953;
- (e) Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery 1956;
- (f) Convention for the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others 1949;
- (g) Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 and its two Optional Protocols 2001;
- (h) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966;
- (i) Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide 1948;
- (j) Convention on the Political Rights of Women 1952;
- (k) Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages 1962;

⁵ Article 27 of the Constitution.

⁶ Articles 31, 33 of the Constitution.

(l) Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment 1984;

(m) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 and its Optional Protocol; and

(n) Convention against Corruption 2003.

16. Bangladesh is also party to a number of core ILO Conventions that impinge on human rights. They include:

(a) Forced Labour Convention (No. 29) 1930;

(b) Convention on the Right to Organise (Agriculture) (No. 11) 1921;

(c) Convention on the Right to Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise (No.87) 1948; and

(d) Convention on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining (No. 98) 1949.

17. Pursuant to the Voluntary Pledges made prior to its election to the Human Rights Council in 2006, Bangladesh has strived to achieve, to the extent possible, the goals stipulated therein. Some of the tangible achievements in this area are:

(a) Ensuring the independence of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC);

(b) Establishing the National Human Rights Commission;

(c) Separating the judiciary from the executive;

(d) Continuing efforts, through pragmatic national development policies, to ensure basic necessities of people particularly in terms of food, clothing, shelter, education and primary health care.

V. SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE GROUND

A. Civil and political rights

18. The Constitution of Bangladesh acts as a bulwark against abuse of civil and political rights. It provides fundamental rights that guarantee, inter alia, equality before law and equal protection of law, protection of life and liberty, and prohibits discriminatory treatment and forced labour. The Constitution also guarantees rights during arrest, detention, trial and punishment. Specific liberties of speech and expression, movement, association and assembly, trade and occupation, religion, property, security of home and privacy are also guaranteed. Taken together, these rights pave the way for a just, free and egalitarian society.

19. Bangladesh is blessed with a free media, a vibrant civil society, and an independent judiciary that have over the years played a critical role in protecting citizens' fundamental rights. Both print and electronic media enjoy full freedom in expressing their views. The enactment of the Right to Information Act in September 2008 has only further reinforced State commitment to promote freedom of and access to information.

20. Engaged in diverse activities including micro-credit, healthcare, non-formal education, women's empowerment, and advocacy on human rights and governance, NGOs and community-based organisations contribute significantly to the promotion and protection of civil and political rights. Public interest litigations are used for addressing irregularities in governance, challenging arbitrary detention, and ensuring citizen's lawful rights.

B. Economic, social and cultural rights

21. With keenness to provide an enabling environment for economic growth and social progress, the government focuses on healthcare, education, basic services, public investments, employment generation, economic reforms, and development of agriculture, rural and urban infrastructures. The government has introduced a number of reform measures to facilitate private sector-led industrial development as one of the principal drivers of economic growth. The Industrial Policy attaches great importance to creating opportunities for women entrepreneurs and workers. Sectoral minimum wages exist for workers in the private sector. And a National Minimum Wage has been declared for unskilled workers in 2007.

22. Emphasis has been put on providing social safety nets for the vulnerable groups through income generating as well as pension schemes. The Fundamental Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution spell out economic, social and political priorities for the State. The fact that the courts in Bangladesh construe the provisions of the Constitution and the laws in conformity with these principles underscore their significance in the promotion and protection of a just and equitable social order that is premised on economic, social and cultural freedom of the people.

C. Rights of specific vulnerable groups

1. Women's rights and empowerment

23. Pursuant to Constitutional obligations⁷ and provisions in the CEDAW, the government has been consistently striving to improve women's status in both private and public spheres.

24. With significant government encouragement and sponsorship, women are increasingly assuming leadership roles both at national and local levels. They can compete for the 300 general seats of the Parliament. Apart from 45 reserved seats in Parliament, women occupy one-third reserved seats in all local bodies including Municipal Corporations. Women compete equally with their male counterparts in judicial and civil services entry examinations. They also enjoy 10 per cent job quotas in government services. Women in Bangladesh now occupy high positions in executive, legislative and judicial organs of the state, and also serve in law enforcement and national security agencies.

25. Participation of women in formal labour market has significantly increased due to changes in rural livelihood patterns, economic expansion and rural-to-urban migration. The labour force in the ready-made-garment industry is constituted almost exclusively of women workers. Women migrant workers' contribution to Bangladesh's remittance earning is significant. Women also constitute the single largest group of beneficiaries of both government and non-government micro-credit programmes.

26. Bangladesh has a separate Ministry and a Directorate of Women's Affairs. An Inter-Ministerial CEDAW Committee co-ordinates implementation of CEDAW and other relevant plans of action on women. It is now mandatory to include mother's name alongside that of father in all

⁷ Articles 10, 28.

documents/certificates and passports. Special laws have been enacted to curb gender-based violence.

2. Children's rights

27. One of the early signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Bangladesh is committed to fulfil the objectives of the Convention and the global plan of action that is explicitly linked with the MDGs endorsed at the United Nations Special Session on Children in 1992.

28. Commendable progress has been made in the context of primary, secondary and non-formal education, immunisation, nutrition, primary healthcare, water and sanitation. Emphasis is put on narrowing gender gaps in all areas of child development. There is a separate Ministry that co-ordinates targeted interventions for children's rights and welfare, including providing vocational training and credit to youth. National Children's Council is the highest policy-level body to monitor enforcement of child related laws and rights. The Inter-Ministerial CRC Committee co-ordinates implementation of CRC and other plans of action on children. Bangladesh Shishu Academy (Bangladesh Children's Academy) develops and implements projects on cultural and psychological development of children.

3. Rights of minority groups

29. Bangladesh is home to diverse religious and ethnic minority groups living in complete harmony for generations. Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Buddhists share a relationship of mutual respect, and are free to practice their own religion and culture. Government holidays are declared to mark special occasions of all the religions. Separate budgetary allocations are made for development and maintenance of religious institutions of different faiths. Special endowments are also made in favour of these communities for celebrating religious festivals. Government has created separate welfare trusts for religious minority communities including grants for construction and maintenance of places of worship.

30. The country hosts many tribal communities that reside in both plain lands and hilly areas. Chittagong Hill Tracts, the habitat of several ethnic groups, is the most diversified area in terms of language and culture.

31. In order to ensure the rights of minority groups, particularly of ethnic origin, 5 per cent seats in all university level institutions are reserved for ethnic minorities. They also enjoy special quota in government recruitment. Separate ministries have been set up for dealing with affairs of ethnic communities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and of different religious groups.

VI. KEY INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

A. The Supreme Court

32. The Supreme Court is the highest judicial authority of Bangladesh. It is empowered to review legislative enactments and executive actions to assess whether they are compatible with Constitutional provisions. It has jurisdiction to hear writ petitions and issue directives to ensure justice to citizens whose rights have been violated.

33. The Constitution has empowered⁸ the High Court Division of the Supreme Court to pass orders for enforcement of the fundamental rights envisaged in the Constitution⁹. An individual has the right to move the High Court Division for enforcement of fundamental rights¹⁰. An aggrieved person may resort to five different types of writs in seeking relief from the High Court Division: prohibition and certiorari (preventing public functionaries exceeding their power), mandamus (compelling public functionaries to do what they are legally bound to do), habeas corpus (ensuring that no person is detained or confined illegally), and quo warranto (ensuring that no one occupies a public office without lawful authority)¹¹.

34. The High Court Division also has power, under Section 561-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, to pass any order it deems necessary to prevent abuse of the process of any court or for the ends of justice. This inherent jurisdiction of the High Court Division, which remains intact even during Martial Law/emergency, is a critical tool for protection of fundamental human rights.

B. National Human Rights Commission

35. A three-member National Human Rights Commission was established on 01 September 2008. The Commission shall receive and investigate allegations of human rights violations from any individual or group. When such an allegation is proved, the Commission is empowered to settle the matter by itself or refer it to Court/relevant authorities, as the case may be. It shall also monitor the overall human rights situation in the country.

VII. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

A. Law Commission

36. A Law Commission, established pursuant to the Law Commission Act 1996, is empowered to act on identifying causes of delay in court cases, and recommending amendment of existing laws and enactment and/or repeal of laws including those having direct bearing on women, children and other disadvantaged groups.

B. National Legal Aid Organization (NLAO)

37. Recognising inherent difficulties that impede marginalized and poor people's access to justice, the government enacted the Legal Aid Act in 2000 under which a National Legal Aid Organization has been set up to provide legal aid services to the poor and the disadvantaged.

C. Office of the Attorney General

38. Pursuant to the Government Attorney Services Ordinance, 2008, a permanent government attorney service has been established. The purpose of this Ordinance is to appoint, train, retain and administer Government Law Officers to ensure effective representation of the State in the judicial process in the Supreme Court, District Courts and Upazilla (sub-district) courts.

D. Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC)

39. An Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) was established in 2004 by an Act of the Parliament. The Act sought to establish an independent agency for combating corruption with legal authority to conduct inquiries and investigations, file and conduct cases, review legal measures for

⁸ Article 102 (1).

⁹ Articles 26-43.

¹⁰ Article 44 (1) of the Constitution.

¹¹ Article 102 of the Constitution.

preventing corruption, demand statement of assets and liabilities, and seize property in excess of known sources of income. On 22 February 2007, rules of procedure of the ACC have been reformulated providing it with greater independence and authority.

E. Regulatory Reforms Commission

40. The government has established the Regulatory Reform Commission (RRC) to enhance efficiency in public service delivery system by way of recommending measures to government agencies. The RRC has private sector and civil society representation as well. Pursuant to one of its recommendations, all government agencies have established Citizens' Charters.

F. Office of Ombudsman

41. The Constitution of Bangladesh¹² provides for the office of Ombudsman who shall exercise such powers and perform such functions as the Parliament may, by law, determine. This includes the power to investigate any action taken by a Ministry, a public officer or a statutory public authority. An Ombudsman Act was enacted in 1980 which states that the Parliament shall select officials for the Office of Ombudsman.

G. Tax Ombudsman

42. An Act was adopted by the Parliament in 2005 for the appointment of a Tax Ombudsman. The office of the Tax Ombudsman is responsible for receiving complaints from tax payers, making the National Board of Revenue accountable, and suggesting measures for redressing malpractices.

H. Institutional arrangements to address violence against women and children

43. The government has established One-Stop Crisis Centres (OCC) affiliated with medical colleges in six divisions to provide, in collaboration with selected NGOs, required services to victims of violence. Woman and child victims of violence and trafficking receive emergency medical treatment, police assistance, legal aid, psycho-social counselling, and shelter facilities (in Safe Custody Homes) through the OCC. Special cells for women have been set up at the Police Headquarters and at selected police stations.

44. Six DNA Profiling Laboratories have been established to facilitate work of the OCC. The introduction of the DNA laboratories has been helping investigation of cases of rape, murder, paternity, inheritance, immigration, and identification of missing persons and/or mutilated human bodies.

45. Bangladesh has made considerable progress in addressing the problem of trafficking in women and children, attributable largely to awareness campaign, women's empowerment, and increased vigilance by concerned agencies.

46. The government has set up a Central Cell in the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs to address issues related to violence against women, which is monitored by a 15-member Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee. Similar cells exist in the Department of Women's Affairs and National Women's Organization¹³. There is also a Monitoring Sub-committee for expeditious handling of grave and sensational offences.

¹² Article 77 of the Constitution.

¹³ *Jatiyo Mahila Shangstha*.

I. The Media

47. The media in Bangladesh is fiercely independent. It is active in flagging issues of human rights, development, governance and other matters of national importance in the public domain with a view to generating dialogue and consensus on those issues. Some 544 daily newspapers, 357 weeklies, 62 fortnightlies, and 93 monthlies are being published with over two million circulations. There has also been a phenomenal growth of private satellite TV channels and radios. Both print and electronic media are vocal against corruption of public officials, government irregularities, and social violence. They as well as the State-owned TV channels and radios carry special features on gender issues, civil liberties and non-discrimination. The government has formulated a policy for introducing community radio service throughout the country for fostering community development and alerting local communities of imminent natural disaster and helping them mitigate risks.

J. Civil society

48. Comprising varied sections of the public, the civil society of Bangladesh is known for its vibrancy and for its contribution to the establishment of a sound democratic system. Citizen's movements, including public interest litigation, play a critical role in consistently holding the government accountable for their actions/inactions and resisting infringements of citizen's fundamental rights. These initiatives are reinforced by NGOs and community-based organisations through their multi-dimensional programmes and activities. Drawing on their knowledge of local issues and relationship with grass-root level beneficiaries, NGOs play a vital role in human rights and development efforts. Their activities range from micro-credit and income generation, access to justice and environmental conservation to the promotion of accountability and transparency in public dealings and participation in development management.

49. It is widely acknowledged that policy and material support of the government have contributed greatly to the growth of the NGO sector which now hosts about 14,000 registered NGOs. Some of them, like Grameen Bank and BRAC, have earned international recognition and acclaim for their efforts on poverty alleviation and human development. Indeed, successes in areas of human rights, good governance and development are largely the outcome of complementary activities carried out by the government and NGOs at both national and local levels.

VIII. GOOD PRACTICES

A. Separation of the judiciary from the executive

50. An independent judiciary is a sine qua non for democratic governance and protection of human rights. The Supreme Court of Bangladesh has always enjoyed full independence in its functioning. Despite a Constitutional requirement for independence of the lower judiciary (Article 22), the subordinate courts remained subjects of executive control for long, seriously impeding their impartiality and integrity. In most cases, the magistrates had to perform dual role of executive officer of the government as well as that of a judicial officer.

51. A writ was filed in 1999 challenging the validity of the appointment and regulation of judicial officials in accordance with the Bangladesh Civil Service (Reorganisation) Order 1980 (with amendment of 1986) and terming it as ultra vires the Constitution. The High Court Division of the Supreme Court agreed that such appointment and regulation were indeed ultra vires the Constitution, and directed the government to make Rules as per Article 115 of the Constitution for establishing a separate Judicial Service Commission.

52. President promulgated the Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Ordinance on 11 February 2007 thereby completing the process of formally separating the magistracy/ judiciary from the executive. The much anticipated separation of the judiciary from the executive came into effect on 01 November 2007.

B. Drive against corruption

53. Reconstitution of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and making it functionally independent have been priority for the Caretaker Government, which made the ACC central to its drive against corruption. The Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2004 was revised and the Anti-Corruption Rules 2007 was adopted to enhance effectiveness of the Commission. Special Tribunals were established to expedite prosecution of corruption cases. A National Coordination Council (NCC) has been assisting the ACC in investigation and arrest of individuals accused of corruption. Public awareness of the ACC and its activities has increased considerably as a result of regular information-sharing interactions of the ACC with media and the public.

C. Revamping of the Election Commission

54. The Election Commission is a constitutional body that oversees the preparation of voter lists and related activities for conducting national elections. The Election Commission was reconstituted in 2007 in the face of allegations of bias and inefficiency against the former election commissioners. The Election Commission successfully completed in 2008 voter registration of a staggering 80 million voters with photograph and biometric features, a unique achievement by any standard. The Election Commission also made significant progress in improving the electoral framework in consultation with all stakeholders. It also declared an election 'road map' underscoring, inter alia, reform of the political parties, delimitation of constituencies based on the last census, deadlines for local government and parliamentary elections, and use of transparent ballot boxes.

55. The local government elections in four city corporations and nine municipalities held on 4 August 2008 were the first elections conducted by the present Election Commission. The elections had been termed by all the observers as free, fair and credible. There was no complaint from the contestants. It had been an election that witnessed the highest ever voter participation in Bangladesh's electoral history, voter turnout ranging from 75 per cent to 92 per cent. It is also for the first time in Bangladesh's history that all the vulnerable groups including minority communities and women participated in the elections in unprecedented number in an environment free from violence and intimidation.

D. Local government reforms

56. The Constitution of Bangladesh¹⁴ provides for representative local government institutions at all levels of administration, and advocates for representation of peasants, workers and women. An expert committee constituted in June 2007 recommended, in consultation with relevant stakeholders including professionals, political parties and civil society organisations, several measures for enhanced autonomy, financial empowerment and further democratisation of the local government bodies, and for establishing a permanent Local Government Commission. Establishment of the Commission is underway.

¹⁴ Articles 9 and 11.

E. Police reforms

57. The Bangladesh Police Ordinance 2007 has been drafted, after grass-root level consultations with all stakeholders including general members of the public, to replace the Police Act of 1861. It incorporates provisions stipulating adequate incentives for the police, codes of conduct with particular reference to upholding human rights in discharge of duties, gender guidelines for treatment of women and children, and punitive measures against police personnel for violation of their legal obligations.

58. The government has converted a select number of police stations into Model Police Stations in both metropolitan and rural areas to ensure pro-people policing. Legal Service Delivery Centres have been established to improve police–community relationships. Police Open House Days have been introduced to ensure interactions between the community and members of the police force.

59. The Government has established a Security Cell at the Police Headquarters for investigating allegations against police officers for breaching law and human rights. The Cell is also empowered to take punitive action against members of law enforcement agencies who are found guilty of violating law or human rights.

60. The process of setting up a Victim Support Centre and a Criminal Intelligence Analysis Unit is also underway. The former will ensure physical, psycho-social and financial assistance to victims of crime and human rights abuse, whereas the latter will engage in the analysis of crimes and devising of potential interventions, particularly to restrict human and drug trafficking.

F. Strides in education

61. Universal free primary education has been the centre-piece of Bangladesh's efforts towards social development and education. Some 15 per cent of development budget is allocated for the education sector of which 64 per cent is earmarked for primary education. The net enrolment rate in primary education stood at 91.7 percent in 2007, and the ratio of girls to boys in primary education was 50:50. While current trends demonstrate a narrowing of existing gender disparities in nearly all social MDG indicators in general, it is more marked in the education sector.

62. Success in education is attributable to governmental efforts which have been complemented by the NGOs. The government has made primary education free and compulsory for all children under the Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990. The government 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 including financial incentives for the schools themselves. The government ran a Food-for-Education Programme providing food ration to poor primary school children in rural areas, which has now been replaced by cash assistance to the poor families for sending their children to school.

63. The programmes of providing free education to girls up to grade XII and stipends to girls at the secondary level have played an important role in improving access to and retention of girls in secondary school. It has also helped reducing child marriages.

64. The Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE) was set up in April 2005 to conduct non-formal education. Besides, efforts are ongoing to equip urban working children with local market-oriented income-generating and vocational training alongside basic education. The running of non-formal education parallel to formal primary education has contributed significantly to providing an alternative channel of education to those who cannot avail of formal education. Non-formal education is imparted largely by NGOs.

G. Poverty alleviation and human resource development

65. Poverty alleviation has been the greatest national concern, and hence the primary policy priority of Bangladesh since her independence. Planned and coordinated development efforts have been undertaken for improvement of the living standards of its people, many of whom still live below subsistence level. More than half of development as well as non-development budget are routinely allocated for direct and indirect poverty reduction activities.

66. These efforts have made Bangladesh a success-story in poverty alleviation. Bangladesh's so called 'silent revolution'—as the World Bank described it—came to be known as a new and attractive paradigm for development. Bangladesh has also been able to tackle the food crisis that it faced after the cyclone Sidr of November 2007. Besides providing rice to the poor people at an affordable price, timely policy and financial intervention in support of the farmers was critical in this regard.

67. A wide range of social safety-nets have been put in place to address multi-dimensional challenges faced by the poor. They include cash transfer programmes, food transfer programmes, micro-credit programmes and other special poverty alleviation activities. These programmes have been designed to enhance the economic status of the poor and at the same time, equip them to make optimum use of the available resources.

68. Both the government and NGOs have been implementing targeted programmes for poverty alleviation, employment and income-generation for the poor and the disadvantaged. Parallel to development initiatives, the government is offering correctional services to child offenders, training and rehabilitation of socially disadvantaged women, and maintenance and rehabilitation of orphans, vagrants and victims of violence.

69. These initiatives have yielded positive outcome. According to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics using Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) method, the incidence of income poverty at the national level declined from 48.9 per cent in 2000 to 40 per cent percent in 2005. By using lower poverty line method, it is estimated that poverty declined to 25.1 per cent in 2005 from 34.3 per cent in 2000. The incidence of hard-core poverty is also on the decline.

H. Enactment/amendment of laws

70. Bangladesh's commitment to protect and promote human rights in compliance with international obligations is evident from the enactment/amendment of domestic legislation in vital areas as follows:

- (a) The Representation of the People (Amendment) Ordinance, 2008;
- (b) The Right to Information Ordinance, 2008;
- (c) Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Ordinance on 11 February 2007;
- (d) The Prevention of Oppression against Women and Children Act, 2000 (as amended in 2003);
- (e) The Anti-Terrorism Ordinance, 2008;
- (f) The Public Procurement Rules, 2008;

- (g) The Government Attorney Services Ordinance, 2008;
- (h) The National Human Rights Commission Ordinance, 2007;
- (i) The Legal Aid Act, 2000 (as amended in 2006);
- (j) The Village Courts Act, 2006;
- (k) The Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006;
- (l) The Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation Act, 2006;
- (m) The Public Procurement Act, 2006;
- (n) The Micro-Credit Regulatory Authority Act, 2006;
- (o) The Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004;
- (p) The Acid Control Act, 2002;
- (q) The Acid Offences Suppression Act, 2002;
- (r) The Disability Welfare Act, 2001.

71. Bangladesh has recently amended its Citizenship Act. According to the Bangladesh Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2008, children born of a Bangladeshi woman married to a non-Bangladeshi will now be entitled to Bangladeshi citizenship. Besides, a law on Consumer Protection is in the process of being finalised. Dialogues are on-going with civil society for a law on Protection of Domestic Violence.

72. Changes have been brought to the Prevention of Oppression against Women and Children Act in 2003 in order to: (a) revise the definition of a child by raising its age to under 16 years as opposed to under 14 years; (b) include the persons committing dowry-related violence and seeking dowry in the Act; (c) make the act of instigating suicide by a woman punishable, (d) ensure maintenance by the State, as opposed to the rapist, of a child born following rape; and (e) taking the consent of a girl by the Court before placing her in safe custody.

73. The government has instilled some elements of consensual resolution into the formal judicial system to assure litigants expeditious and cost-effective justice delivery. Initiatives in this area culminated in the practical application of ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) provisions in The Family Courts Ordinance 1985 and the incorporation of ADR provisions in The Code of Civil Procedure 1908 and The Artha Rin Adalat Act 2003 (Money Loan Court Act).

74. Changes have been brought to the Representation of People's Order (RPO) 1972 in an attempt to democratise decision-making process within the political parties and make their financial transactions transparent. As per the amended RPO, the candidates contesting in national elections are now obliged to make public certain information related to their assets and liabilities.

I. Gender governance

75. The government attaches highest priority to women's development. A National Council for Women's Development is responsible for promoting advancement of women in all spheres of life. Women in Development (WID) Focal Points, Women's Development Implementation and Evaluation Committee with representation from all concerned Ministries as well as District and

Upazilla (sub-district) WID Coordination Committees work together for mainstreaming women in governance and development activities. National budget has been made gender-sensitive. Training on skills and entrepreneurship development is imparted to rural women alongside community services to reduce poverty, improve food security and help them negotiate with gender discrimination in the family and local community.

J. Government–Non-governmental organization/private sector collaboration

76. Moving away from the traditional governance paradigm that was rooted in inflexible and centralised modes of operation, the government is increasingly collaborating with NGOs/private sector in the country's development process. The shift has enabled civil societies, NGOs and private sector bodies to participate in governmental functions and decision-making process, implementation of policies, training, advocacy, parallel drafting of legislation, preparing policy papers and generally identifying areas for intervention. This trend marks a democratic and pluralistic social process. Apart from human rights and legal issues, the government collaborates with NGOs in core development activities. Coordinated activities take place, inter alia, in areas of agriculture, healthcare, family planning, primary and secondary education, non-formal schooling, vocational training, environmental protection, and rural and community development.

IX. TOWARDS ENSURING HUMAN RIGHTS: GOVERNMENT POLICIES, PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

77. Government commitment towards protecting and promoting human rights as well as eliminating all forms of discrimination from the society is obvious from a number of measures, plans, policies and programmes adopted by it targeting specific groups and particular issues.

A. Women

78. Bangladesh adopted the Beijing Platform of Action without any reservation, and has undertaken a follow-up Plan of Action for its implementation. Elimination of gender disparities in key areas of law, economics, politics and family was the principal feature of the 1997 National Policy for Advancement of Women as well as the National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women developed in the same year. In response to advocacy by women's rights groups, the government has formulated another Women's Development Policy in 2008, which is under negotiation with the stakeholders.

79. Special measures have been taken to address feminisation of poverty, which include Allowances Programme for Widowed, Deserted and Destitute Women, a pilot programme on Allowances for Poor Lactating Mothers and Maternal Health Voucher Scheme, and Community Nutrition Programme. The government has consistently increased allocation to these programmes to ensure income generation and rehabilitation of underprivileged women and children.

80. The attainment of gender equality through sustainable development of women is an overarching goal of the Framework of the Women's Advancement and Rights: Route to Poverty Reduction. Some of the strategic objectives of this Framework are to ensure women's participation in mainstream market-oriented economic activities, improve women's overall capacity to perform household, reproductive and income generating roles, enhance women's participation in political processes and decision-making, and ensure social protection for women against vulnerability and risk. Considerable progress has been made in these areas of critical importance to national life.

81. The Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Programme is one the most successful women's development initiatives. The Programme has a nationwide outreach covering nearly 750,000 of poor rural women. The programme emphasises on women's self-reliance by facilitating their graduation to NGO programmes following the termination of the food support provided under the VGD programme. Women beneficiaries of this initiative also participate in local government elections, distribution of food-grains and other services, and training on special issues including human rights. The government has also undertaken a VGD programme for the ultra-poor aiming to enhance productivity of ultra-poor, vulnerable women.

82. The project on Development of Assetless Women is aimed at alleviating extreme poverty of women and their dependents. Some 2,79,999 women VGD card-holders were given income-generating training to develop their earning capacities during 2001—2007.

83. Women constitute the single largest group of beneficiaries of micro-credit schemes in Bangladesh. As of June 2006, a total of Taka 2,857.3 million has been distributed to women under several projects of the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs. Institutional micro-credit is also provided directly to women by nationalised banks that are spread across rural areas, but mostly by the NGOs like Grameen and BRAC.

B. Children

84. The government has undertaken steps for promoting children's rights, and for creating a congenial environment in which they would be able to grow to their full potential. The government adopted several National Plans of Action on Children (the most recent one spans 2005-2010) for targeted interventions in key areas of children's protection and development. One of the greatest achievements of the NPA process has been the internalisation of the Plan of Action on Children in the national planning mechanism and preparatory consultations with stakeholders including children. The process has raised awareness of children's rights as the document is extensively used in lobbying and advocacy for mainstreaming child rights issues into development programmes.

85. Inclusion of children's issue in government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper is another indicator of State commitment to children's cause. Besides, arrangements for subsistence allowance have been made under various programmes targeting the rehabilitation of orphaned children, in particular child victims of natural disasters.

86. The government has been placing high priority on sexual abuse and exploitation of children, deprivation of liberty, early marriage and lack of birth registration. In an attempt to address some of these concerns, the government has adopted a National Plan of Action against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children including Trafficking in 2002. An Implementation and Monitoring Committee was set up to ensure coordination and monitoring of this Plan of Action.

87. Harmonising national laws on juvenile justice with the CRC, the government drafted the National Social Policy on Alternative Models of Care and Protection for Children in Contact with the Law. An inter-ministerial committee monitors protection of children who come into contact with the law.

88. Pursuant to its commitment to eradicate child labour, the government is in the process of finalising National Child Labour Policy. It has embarked on a Time Bound Programme (TBP), which is primarily a plan of action for eliminating the worst forms of child labour within a prescribed time frame, addressing the root causes of child labour, promoting basic education and linking national development efforts to action against child labour. This programme is essentially a

follow-up action to the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour.

C. Tribal populations

89. The government is committed to ensuring welfare of its people irrespective of race, religion, ethnicity, language and culture. Accordingly, it attaches importance to improving the quality of life and human rights of all minority groups including those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

90. The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is home to 11 different ethnic communities. The Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs is mandated, inter alia, to uphold social, economic, cultural and educational rights of the hill people and accelerate socio-economic growth in the region. Hill District Councils, composed of people from the area, are in charge of all development activities in the region. .

91. Special development allocations are provided for the CHT in addition to general allocations. Budgetary allocations for the region have steadily increased from Taka 1096.2 million in 2003-2004 to Taka 2577.3 million in 2007-2008 for development activities in sectors of health, education, culture, sports, water and sanitation. The government has also allocated funds for Test Relief (food-grain) and Gratuitous Relief (cash) for marginalised people living in the hill districts to help them through lean agricultural periods, food deficits and natural disasters.

92. District Judge and Sessions Judge Courts have been established in all the three hill districts to facilitate hill people's access to justice. The government has taken initiative to bring the remote places of the hill districts under a mobile network.

D. Persons with disabilities

93. Bangladesh is the twentieth country to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, among the 41 States Party. Recognising the need to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities, the government has established 46 Focal Points in government ministries and departments to deal with disability issues. The Jatiyo Protibondhi Unnayan Foundation (National Disability and Development Foundation) was established as early as 1999 to promote and provide services, including financial assistance, to persons with disabilities. The government has since restructured the Foundation as an autonomous body. In recognition of Bangladesh's commitment and contribution to the causes of persons with disabilities, a representative of the Foundation has recently been elected to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

94. The government has adopted an inclusive policy under the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II), following which children with special needs are slowly graduating to mainstream education. A National Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2006, has been updated in 2008. The plan focuses on a wide spectrum of issues and interventions, and stresses on the participation of poor persons with disabilities in poverty alleviation and development programmes in both rural and urban contexts.

E. Refugees

95. The government has been actively supporting the Myanmarese refugees by providing them with temporary shelter, food and medical assistance. Mindful of the difficulties faced by them in refugee camps, the government has made special provisions for improving their living conditions in the camps. The government has allotted a total of 703 acres of land (the production value of which is Taka 70 million) for their residence. About 2,000 refugee families live in these shelters.

96. A total of 20 schools have been set up to cater nearly 7,500 refugee children residing in the camps. Provisions have been made to generate self-help activities and skills development by the refugee population. The government has spent approximately Taka 100 million on providing administrative support to Myanmarese refugees. The 59th session of the Executive Committee of the UNHCR's programme commended positive contribution of the Government of Bangladesh in improving living condition of the Myanmarese refugees as well as of the stranded Pakistanis, and said that Bangladesh was the only country which submitted a report on the Agenda for Protection in spite of not being a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of refugees.

F. Poverty reduction

1. Annual Development Plans

97. The Annual Development Plans of the government essentially concentrate on implementation of development programmes through public sector organisations in targeted ways. ADPs also seek to ensure fundamental rights of citizens, particularly disadvantaged populations, in economic, social, cultural and political fields through integrated development activities.

98. A considerable number of pro-poor and pro-women development initiatives have been undertaken by the government. These projects include, inter alia, rural poverty alleviation, productive livelihood/employment opportunities for rural women, prevention of violence against women, women's reproductive health, empowering socially disadvantaged women and their children, combating trafficking in women and children, social and legal empowerment of women, policy leadership and advocacy, and sustainable livelihood of socially disadvantaged women.

2. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP)

99. Bangladesh is striving to attain the MDGs by 2015. It has already achieved the MDG related to gender parity in primary and secondary education, and is on track to attain other MDGs. After expiration of the first PRSP adopted in 2005, the government has adopted a new PRSP in 2008 aiming to maximise pro-poor benefits and provide safety net measures to protect the poor, especially women, against anticipated and unanticipated income/ consumption shocks through targeted and other efforts. It underscored the significance of human development of the poor, and the need to raise their capability through education, health, sanitation and safe water, nutrition and social interventions.

100. The PRSP also includes participation and empowerment of the poor, especially women, and other disadvantaged and marginalised groups such as people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and the ecologically vulnerable. It emphasises on promoting good governance by improving implementation capacity, local governance, reducing corruption, ensuring access to justice and improving sectoral governance through combined efforts of the government, development agencies, private sector, NGOs, community organisations, media, academia, and above all, the people of Bangladesh.

3. Strategy for Poverty Reduction in the Lagging Regions of Bangladesh

101. In order to eliminate regional variations in terms of economic development and social protection, a vision paper, titled A Strategy for Poverty Reduction in the Lagging Regions of Bangladesh has been formulated. It broadly recommends the pursuit of a balanced development agenda based on both short-term and long-term policy measures and action plans. The government has already initiated implementation of the short-term action plans with a special allocation of over Taka 1.40 billion to 28 extremely backward and impoverished districts of Bangladesh.

G. Social safety-net and empowerment

102. Unexpected crude-oil price hike and global food crisis have affected purchasing power of the poor and lower middle income people of Bangladesh. Intent on providing social security to these segments of the population, the government has widened the social safety-net programmes covering increased number of beneficiaries. It has increased the rates of subventions involving Taka 169.32 billion (2.8 per cent of the GDP) in the current fiscal year, which is 48 per cent higher than the previous year's allocation of Taka 114.67 billion (2.1 per cent of the GDP).

103. Amongst the various safety nets programmes undertaken, two are of particular significance. A 100 Days' Employment Generation Programme to ensure employment for the rural unemployed. Under this programme, job opportunities have been created locally for 2 million unemployed rural poor, thereby generating 200 million man-days of employment. The Food for Work Programme, with an allocation of food worth Taka 15.78 billion, generated 144 million man-days of employment for the rural poor, particularly women. The government has also allocated funds amounting to Taka 24.76 billion for self-employment of some 15 million families under its micro-credit operations.

104. The Housing Fund for the Homeless has provisions including loans and compensation for victims of river erosion. Other government programmes include Old Age Allowance, Allowance for Insolvent Persons with Physical Disability, Honorarium for Insolvent Freedom Fighters, Allowance for the Acid Burnt and Physically Handicapped, and Seasonal Unemployment Reduction Allowance. Under the Test Relief Programme, food-grain is distributed to victims of natural disasters.

105. The government has introduced the Hill Tracts Village Centre Programme that emphasises on the development of education, health, sanitation, nutrition, mother and child care in the CHT.

H. Health and food

106. The principal thrust of the National Health Policy formulated in 2000 is to ensure basic healthcare requirements at all levels of the society without discrimination. It also focuses on population control and immunisation.

107. The government has adopted a comprehensive National Strategy for Maternal Health for ensuring quality services for safe motherhood. It has undertaken the Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Programme that provides essential healthcare for all and aims to reduce maternal and child mortality. It also seeks to enhance public health sector's capacity to address threats of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The National Nutrition Programme promotes, inter alia, micro-nutrient supplementation, breast feeding services for pregnant and lactating mothers and newly-weds, and behavioural change communication.

108. The government has adopted a National Food Policy in 2006 to ensure dependable and sustained food security for all people at all times. Its objectives are to (i) ensure adequate and stable supply of safe and nutritious food, (ii) enhance people's purchasing power for increased accessibility to food, (iii) ensure adequate nutrition for all, in particular women and children.

I. Education

109. In order to achieve education for all by 2015, the government has laid special emphasis on school enrolment, primary and pre-primary education, stipends, and increased contact hours between teachers and students. Significant progress has been made in increasing access to education and expanding geographic coverage. The policy reforms generally accredited to these

developments include sustained allocation of public resources, collaborative partnership between the government and the private sector, and introduction of subsidies for the poor and girls.

110. The government has adopted the Primary Education Development Programme II (PEDP-II) in a coordinated, holistic and sector-based fashion. It has strived to address minority communities' demands for education by introducing, alongside mainstream education, a temple-based Pre-primary Child and Mass Education Project for poor Hindu communities. The government is implementing a project on 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 Upazillas (sub-districts). School Feeding Programmes are being implemented in highly food-deficit areas.

J. Human rights awareness

111. The government is convinced that awareness of human rights is essential for effective enforcement of human rights, and is engaged in raising awareness of human rights amongst members of government agencies including administrative, judicial and law enforcement officials through specialised training and information dissemination. Issues that form part of the advocacy campaigns range from gender equality and violence against women to development concerns and other civil and political rights of citizens.

K. Land administration and management

112. Land is a major source of income for the rural poor in Bangladesh. Government's Policy on Land Use promotes optimal use of land to arrest loss of agricultural spaces, prevention of soil degradation and protection of State-owned land. The government has recovered large areas of land from land-grabbers, which are now being legally processed for settlement. Transparency in land administration is ensured through citizens' charters displayed throughout the country.

L. Environment and development

113. The government has taken significant steps to incorporate sustainable environmental development into its policies and programmes considering the impacts of natural disaster and degradation of natural resources on human rights. It can report successes in social forestry and increasing access to safe drinking water, particularly in the urban areas. It has also adopted national policies related to land use, environment, forest and agriculture.

114. The government is engaged in programmes to restrict industrial pollution, manage clinical waste and forests, and protect bio-diversity. Community-managed programmes have been introduced to enhance people's participation in protecting natural resources. The inclusion of environment education in the primary and secondary school curriculum contributes to raising awareness on environmental issues and preservation of bio-diversity amongst the young population.

115. Given that Bangladesh is susceptible to recurring natural disasters, the government integrates human rights programmes with natural disaster management programmes to protect victims of natural calamities by improving preparedness, response, recovery and risk reduction prior to, during and after natural disasters. This includes support to children, adolescents, the elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in sustaining the impact of natural catastrophes.

X. CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

116. Ability to enjoy human rights by the people is constrained by a combination of factors that typically operate at different levels in Bangladesh. While some of these constraints essentially

relate to aspects of governance and structural inadequacies, the overall scenario is complicated by an absence of requisite knowledge of law and rights amongst general people, more particularly, disadvantaged groups like women. The rights of citizens are often compromised by issues that are not purely legal in nature. Amongst these, poverty and natural calamities reign supreme.

117. Poverty hinders the fulfilment of rights particularly of children and women who are the most vulnerable. Bangladesh, an LDC, faces multi-dimensional challenges in fulfilling its commitment to promotion and protection of human rights primarily because of lack of resources. The international community has a critical role to play here. Bangladesh believes that ensuring overall socio-economic development of its people is the greatest guarantee to their full enjoyment of human rights.

118. Bangladesh suffers from multifaceted environmental constraints that effectively challenge human rights and development efforts. Apart from natural disasters, deforestation, soil and river erosion, and degradation, and other consequences of climate change, for which Bangladesh is hardly responsible, are causing unexpected and major environmental crises to the detriment of the general populace. Bangladesh is a predominantly agricultural country where the people depend on crops and livestock for their livelihoods. Future projections of climate change impacts indicate that a substantial reduction in agricultural crops could occur in Bangladesh. Therefore, as global temperatures rise and severe weather conditions take hold worldwide, Bangladesh is likely to experience harsh climatic consequences. Chronic floods and more recently, cyclone Sidr in 2007 have severely affected crops in the northern and southern belts of the country adding to the overall scarcity of food.

119. Despite a drop in fertility rates in Bangladesh, population is projected to rise considerably by 2100. Poverty reduction, therefore, remains a central development challenge for Bangladesh. Over 63 million people still live below the poverty line. Climate change, impact of globalisation and an increasingly competitive and uncertain international trade environment impede higher growth rates. Moreover, structural changes in rural areas have triggered rapid economic migration leading to rising urban poverty, dearth of decent work and inadequate shelter. Poverty enhances physical insecurity and economic vulnerability, and deprives people of opportunities to participate in public decision-making process. Ensuring an increase in the share of the poorest in national consumption/income remains a major challenge for the country.

120. Besides poverty and environment, Bangladesh has been experiencing difficulties in sustaining progress on account of large-scale corruption that has over the years systematically eaten into some of the core public and private institutions. This phenomenon has circumscribed human rights and development efforts by increasing transaction costs in public and private sectors, undermining law and order, depleting fiscal resources, and constraining infra-structure development.

XI. CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

121. There is a serious need for reassessing conventional legal approaches to human rights and devising pragmatic measures that would complement and reinforce legislative efforts to protect rights of the citizens. It is imperative to develop social and economic measures to address issues of poverty and inequality that are often at the root of the problem. It is, therefore, important for programmes on poverty alleviation and development at the macro level not only to ensure equitable distribution of resources and delivery of basic services amongst the poor but also to seek ample investment in the development of human capacity. Broad-based and yet inter-related development efforts such as agrarian reforms, creation of employment and income-generating activities, and access by the poor to technological and development strategies must be undertaken.

122. Bangladesh has made considerable socio-economic progress in the last few years and has a reasonable prospect of meeting many of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015. It needs to sustain the momentum in order to ensure full enjoyment of human rights by its citizens. Massive investments in sectors of poverty eradication and climate change will be key to its success in promoting and protecting human rights of her citizens. It also needs to attend institutional and governance matters in a timely manner.

123. There is an urgent need to build capacity in terms of awareness-raising, resource mobilisation, institutional oversight, and programme management. Although recent institutional reforms are expected to produce tangible improvements in the human rights and development scenario, proper implementation of strategies are fundamental to sustainable impacts. In this regard, continued funding of pro-poor social and economic services and systematic and long-term support for socio-economic changes are vital for greater effectiveness of public institutions and reform drives. Development assistance in the past has contributed significantly to socio-economic achievements in Bangladesh, and is expected to play an equally important role in the future.

Annex

**LIST OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS THAT CONTRIBUTED IN THE
PREPARATION OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

1. Action Aid Bangladesh;
2. Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK);
3. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad;
4. Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC);
5. Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR);
6. Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF);
7. Nagorik Uddyog (Citizen's Initiative);
8. Naripokkho;
9. National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD);
10. Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB);
11. Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA);
12. Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BAPA);
13. Odhikar.

A number of other NGOs were invited to take part in the consultations during the preparation of the national report for the UPR. Some of them are as follows:

1. Centre for Policy Dialogue;
2. Bangladesh Manabdhikar Sangstha.
