



**Statement**

**by**

**Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury**  
**United Nations Under-Secretary-General**  
**and**  
**High Representative for the Least Developed Countries,**  
**Landlocked Developing Countries**  
**and Small Island Developing States**

at the

**59<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly**  
**Second Committee**

**Item 89(b): Women in Development**

**New York**  
**15 November 2004**

Mr. Chairman,

Adopted by the 2004 ECOSOC High-Level Segment, the Ministerial Declaration emphasized that the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) “entails developing human, financial and institutional resources and creating an enabling domestic and global environment”. The Brussels Programme for LDCs and the UN Secretary-General’s report further recognize the mutually reinforcing links between gender equality and poverty eradication as well as the need to tackle disparities between women and men in the fight against poverty.

The gender-based disparity in human development is reflected in the dimensions of the quality of life which include educational attainment, a decent standard of living and life expectancy, factors whose absence translate into inequality in achievement between women and men. This situation is more pronounced in countries with high vulnerability, particularly the Least Developed Countries, where the demand for women’s labour in households and the drudgery and toil for family survival, especially in rural areas, further exacerbates the marginalization of women. In such situations, the main focus is often on creating macro-economic stability and sustainable development, while, unfortunately, putting gender mainstreaming and women’s development on a secondary tier. Lack of productive resources like land, credit, appropriate technology, markets, knowledge-based production methods and fair prices for their goods impede women’s empowerment. That also adversely impacts on their access to affordable decent housing, basic services - including legal aid - and to full participation in decision making.

The United Nations General Assembly resolution 58/206 clearly recognizes “the significant contribution that women make to the economy and the major force that they represent for change and development in all sectors of the economy, especially in key areas such as agriculture, industry and services.” The resolution further reaffirms that women are key contributors to combating poverty through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home. In the LDCs, the socio-economic conditions contribute to a large extent to the feminization of poverty. The high maternal mortality and morbidity in many of these countries have invariably been caused by lack of or inadequate capacity, resources and mechanisms for service delivery that focus on women. This situation has been compounded by the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and young girls.

The human rights instruments that support the right to development provide an effective strategy for overcoming discrimination, in particular, against women. Rights that are taken for granted in some industrialized societies like equal rights and access to education, land, support services and so on are main contributors to sustained socio-economic growth and well being. Building capacity of women to access education and training, credit, knowledge and information will improve economic conditions of societies, facilitate women’s empowerment and contribute to family and household well being. It will enhance women’s economic development, provide more choices for the girl child and improve household quality of life. There is also a great merit in paragraph 27 of 58/206 in which the governments have been urged to create and maintain a non-

discriminatory and gender-sensitive legal environment. The time-frame of 2005 provided in the resolution for such action connects appropriately with the Millennium Declaration review next year.

Many LDCs emerging from conflicts continue to rely on women for provision of basic household support as well as for the economic well being of families and households. The inclusion of women in peace and security efforts is bound to further enhance the broader objectives of conflict resolution and post-conflict peace building. Women's effective participation in the efforts of healing among and within communities will make the peace sustainable and development possible. The LDCs in conflict or coming out of conflict have many examples to share to prove this point.

\*\*\*\*\*