Statement by
H.E. Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh
at the General Debate of the Third Committee of the 68th Regular Session of the UNGA on Agenda item
27: Social Development
New York, 07 October 2013

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by joining previous speakers in congratulating you and other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election. We are confident that your able leadership will surely guide our deliberations to a successful conclusion. Bangladesh delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Fiji on behalf of the G-77 and China.

Mr. Chair:

Since the World Summit for Social Development, in 1995, we took up many ambitious goals for ensuring social development keeping people at the center of development. Progress has been made in many areas, yet significant disparities remain. Many regions still witness disproportionate suffering from income poverty and inadequate access to health care and education. While we have only two years before the MDG target date, people in many regions still live below $1.25 a day. It is alarming to learn that with the current pace of decrease of poverty, we will need another 88 years to eradicate extreme poverty. 743 million adults and 98 million young people will lack basic literacy skills in 2015. It is yet more alarming that 1 per cent of the global population owns nearly half of global wealth, while the poorest half owns less than 1 per cent. Such inequality and disparities only beget social unrest, detriment development achieved.

Mr. Chair:

I am very happy to inform you that my country Bangladesh, despite its resource constraints has been able to make sustainable progress in Social development. Our development perspective gives top priority to accelerated and sustainable social and economic development with focus on poverty alleviation, human resource development, women empowerment, ensuring universal education etc. Our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina believes that investment in human resources is the best investment. Her 'People's Empowerment Model' demands to empower people to face challenges and achieve goals. She believes people both men and women can be empowered by eradicating poverty, guaranteeing education, training and skills, by elimination all sorts of discrimination based on ethnicity, color, sex, religion, etc, by
including the exclusives, by providing minimum decent living and jobs, by eliminating terrorism, ensuring participation and by investing in human resources development.

Under her leadership, Bangladesh has always attached importance to empowerment of vulnerable groups—women, children, older people and persons with disabilities. Our comprehensive women policy has placed women at the forefront of development. Special programmes directed to female education, innovative maternal healthcare services, women entrepreneurship through collateral free credits, vocational training for women—all these have contributed positively in mainstreaming women into development agenda.

We have recognized education as one of the basic components of development. Our gender sensitive education policy has proved to be an effective instrument to ensure girls education. Our programmes like stipend, exemption of tuition for girls up to grade twelve, Education Assistance Trust for the underprivileged students, free text books, e-books inclusion of modern ICT and career Education; inclusion of important issues like climate change, reproductive health have been enabling devices towards access to quality education.

Mainstreaming youth in the overall development process is another priority for the Government. Comprehensive initiative has been undertaken for skill development of young people by providing extensive training in different sectors. A national Service Programme has been introduced. Skill enhancement training programme has been undertaken with a view to enhancing the capacity to access the domestic as well as overseas labour markets. At the same time, arrangements have been made to provide micro-credit on easy terms to encourage the trained youths to be self-employed.

Despite our many social, economic, political and environmental challenges we have made tremendous progress in bringing the issue of disability to the forefront. Through the Global Autism Public Health Initiative launched in 2011, we have significantly addressed our primary challenge, social stigma which permeates all aspects of our society. One stop mobile physiotherapy and other medical services have been established to provide free physiotherapy, hearing aid, visual test counselling, training and related equipment to persons with disabilities in remote areas. An Autism Resource center has been set up for raising social awareness against autism. Last year, we spearheaded a resolution on addressing the socioeconomic needs of individuals, families and societies affected by autism spectrum disorders (ASD) developmental disorders (DD) and associated disabilities, which was adopted unanimously by all the Member States.

In order to mainstream persons with disabilities into development activities, particular attention is being given to ensuring right to education of children with disabilities. A number of specialized schools are established. Students are given monthly stipends.

Apart from formal learning, skills development programme and vocational training are imparted to PWDs to help them get self-employed. Interest free loan is given for their self-employment.
In the formal sector, 1 percent quota in all first class Government services has been reserved for the persons with disability.

Our achievements never make us complacent. While we need to sustain the results, we also have more to do. Here I would like to acknowledge the support we are receiving from our multilateral and bilateral development partners. I believe that such support will be continuous and forthcoming to all specially to LDCs.

Mr. Chair:

As we are now devising post-2015 development agenda, my delegation would like to put forward the following recommendations:

First and foremost, specific interventions at the national level targeting vulnerable population like women, children, older people and persons with disabilities are must.

Secondly, it is now widely recognized that education is the major enabler for development. Therefore, we should focus more on investing not only in access to education but also to ensure quality education. To this end, infrastructure development, ICT based education should be prioritized.

Thirdly, the efforts of developing countries specially LDCs must be supported by development partners. We are worried to note that the aid disbursements have been decreasing to a great extent. As the MDG report 2013 showed that in 2012, net aid disbursements from developed to developing countries totaled $126 billion, which represents a 4 percent drop from 2011. In 2012, bilateral official development assistance to LDCs fell by 13 per cent. Such decline adversely affects the national initiatives of these countries.

Fourthly, Climate change is a major threat to sustained economic growth, agricultural productivity and poverty eradication efforts, especially in developing countries. In my country, owing to rise of sea level, thousands of our residents of low-lying areas are being forced to move to urban cities aggravating slums, joblessness and poverty. Our development gains achieved over the years are eroded by frequent natural disasters. It is therefore necessary that climatically vulnerable countries be compensated adequately to cope with the impacts caused by climate change.

In short, need of the hour is political will and action on the ground and a solid global sustained partnership, not advocacy. I am sure that with such political will and partnership we will certainly achieve “the future we want”

I thank you.