

Statement by Md. Mustafizur Rahman, Deputy Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN on Human Rights, Right to development and Global Governance at the sixth session of the OWG on SDGs, 12 December 2015

Mr. Co-Chair,

Human rights are very important even in development endeavor. The ultimate objective of development is to enjoy a life that is free from want as well as free from fear. Now the question is, how do we incorporate human rights within the next development agenda. Will there be explicit reference to human rights or it will be the necessary undercurrent? Will there be a goal, few targets and indicators on human rights, or it will only be the narrative principle? In this connection, we may look into MDG framework, how human rights were integrated there. Millennium Declaration stated about protection of human rights and fundamental freedom in a very clear term.

Yet, there is a view expressed here that human rights did not feature prominently in the MDG framework. Although the MDGs themselves made no reference to human rights, in practice they broadly correspond to a range of economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. When we decide to have eradication of poverty as a goal, we are realizing right to a life of dignity, when we agree to reduce prevalence of hunger, we are fighting freedom from hunger, when we strive to reduce rates of child mortality, maternal mortality, we are guaranteeing right to life, when we provide safe drinking water and sanitation to people, we are fulfilling their right to water. In that way, we are mainstreaming human rights in development framework. When we talk about gender parity in school enrollment, we are directly dealing with inequality, the fundamental tenet of human rights. In fact, progress in MDG achievement has helped many people realize their human rights to work, to food, to education, to health, to housing, to water and sanitation, and to an adequate standard of living. Naturally, we expect to have similar level of commitment and obligation integrated as far as practicable into the post-2015 framework of global goals, targets and indicators.

Mr. Co-Chair,

Development should lead to greater enjoyment of human rights. Problem may arise if we want to do it the other way and take human rights regime as a means to achieve development. Right based approach to development is often prescribed as a way to mainstream human rights into development. However, we are not aware of any success story or best practice example in this respect so that we can emulate it in our milieu. There are a number of mechanisms currently existed under the auspices of UN to protect and promote human rights. A number of legally binding conventions exist, which oblige countries to account for their action or inactions. If we cannot achieve compliance through these mechanisms, which are obligatory by nature, how can we expect that incorporation of human rights within SDGs, which are simply aspirational goals, can yield better result? Is not it going to be duplication of efforts also? We have excellent, well functioning UPR which has flourished into a principal human rights protection mechanism to monitor periodically the situation of enjoyment of all human rights at national levels. Is not it worthwhile to nurture this mechanism?

In this context, we would emphasize on the promotion of right to development, which in a way encompasses all human rights. It provides a comprehensive framework to pursue a human-

centred and participatory development processes, social justice and equity. It facilitates a holistic approach to the issue of poverty by addressing its systemic and structural causes and fosters international solidarity, cooperation and assistance in areas of concern to developing countries, including technology transfer, access to essential medicines, debt sustainability, development aid, and international trade. It emphasizes that donors, international institutions and the private sector have joint responsibilities to create conditions conducive to human development, including more equitable systems of trade, aid, finance and debt relief. Right to development, in that way covers the entire spectrum of global development agenda that we are probably going to adopt.

May I remind us all that we are dealing with a development agenda that will charter global development effort for the next 15 or plus years. Though we may have a long wish-list that we hope to be reflected in the new development framework, we have to prioritize from among those which are essential for achieving a life of dignity to millions of marginalized people, for a peaceful and prosperous society, and for living within a greener and safer planet. The MDG framework has been successful as it embodied an international consensus on a set of limited goals and targets. If we want to make the new agenda a success, we should strive to do likewise.

Mr. Co-Chair,

We need a development framework for the post 2015 era that includes goals and targets in the area of quality education, decent work, health care, adequate housing, a voice in public decisions, fair institutions of justice. Human rights should be the undercurrent and the important underpinning of the post-2015 agenda as have been in the MDG framework. We do not think it is necessary to be more explicit with human rights notions than that we had in the MDGs.

Mr. Co-Chair,

On the issue of global governance, I would like to say that existing global governance structures have failed to address global inequality, financial crisis and climate change due to a variety of reasons. We need an effective, accountable and inclusive framework of global governance, and in this context underlines the importance of reform of the global financial architecture to ensure greater participation of the developing countries in the decision making and the multilateral trading system to make it more open, rules-based and transparent. We need a robust climate mitigation and adaptation strategy that is based on the principle of common but differential responsibility, a global business culture that follows ethical standards and conducts responsibly and an IPR regime that facilitates transfer of technology in critical life saving and livelihood areas. If we cannot improve global governance, our moral ground to suggest rule of law and good governance at the national levels will surely be weaker. However, this issues, in our views are better suited for the narrative part of the possible development framework, not as goals or targets.

I thank you.