



**BANGLADESH**

**Statement by H.E. Ms. Rabab Fatima, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of  
Bangladesh to the UN at the General Debate of the First Committee of the 75<sup>th</sup> UNGA  
14 October 2020**

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**Mr. Chair,**

I warmly congratulate you and Members of the Bureau on your election to the First Committee. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in discharging your responsibilities.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Allow me to share a few thoughts in my national capacity.

Bangladesh's commitment to general and complete disarmament is total and unwavering. It is anchored in our Constitution, and in the pledge of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to work towards "relaxation of tension, limitation of armaments and the promotion of peaceful coexistence in every part of the world." Guided by this principle, Bangladesh continues to remain at the forefront in assuming higher obligations under all major multilateral disarmament treaties.



**Mr. Chair,**

Since the adoption of the first resolution of the UN on the recommendation by the First Committee - Resolution 1 (I) entitled, "Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy", 75 years have elapsed. Sadly, the promise of disarmament remains elusive. Even today, we continue to live in the constant fear of nuclear catastrophe. We must do more to change the course.

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the work, procedurally and on substance, of the disarmament machinery, and of this Committee. In the days ahead, we would need to put greater efforts to overcome this.

**Mr. Chair,**

Bangladesh believes that the ultimate guarantee of international peace and security lies in the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Therefore, we consistently and strongly support the global quest for a nuclear-weapons-free world. To attain that overarching objective, we ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). We are encouraged to see the steady progress in its ratification. We call upon member states to come forward so that this critical instrument may enter into force at the earliest.

We continue to call for the realization of the commitments enshrined in other key instruments aimed at nuclear disarmament, including the Treaty on the



Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Due to the pandemic, the much-awaited Tenth Review Conference of the NPT had to be postponed. Member States should utilize the extra time to constructively engage with a view to producing a meaningful, tangible, and sustainable outcome.

We must multiply our efforts for rapid entry into force of the CTBT and commencing negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) on Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). We share the concerns of others over the protracted impasse in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) due to the lack of consensus on a programme of work over the past two decades. We hope to see more creative and constructive discussions towards a possible solution to this longstanding problem in the days ahead.

**Mr. Chair,**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in her address to the General Assembly this year, underlined the importance of benefitting from the peaceful use of nuclear technology by developing countries. Bangladesh wishes to emphasize that there should not be any impediment to pursue the inalienable rights of all States to develop, research, produce, and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, including medical science.

We also recognize that such rights come with certain responsibilities. In constructing the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, Bangladesh has remained deeply committed to its responsibilities and continued to follow the highest IAEA standards.



**Mr. Chair,**

We reiterate our abiding support to the Chemical Weapons Convention and underscore the importance of upholding the credibility and integrity of the Organization for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (OPCW). As an elected member of the Executive Council of the OPCW, we are playing our part towards global efforts for chemical disarmament. We have made financial contributions to support the project to upgrade the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store to construct a new facility, the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology.

Bangladesh reiterates its full support to the Biological Weapons Convention and looks forward to working together to strengthen the Convention so that it can robustly face future challenges.

**Mr. Chair,**

Bangladesh remains committed to fulfilling her obligations under the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW) and its Protocols that she is a party to.

Bangladesh has consistently supported the adoption of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons. We call for speedier implementation of the PoA through effective multilateral cooperation and mutual assistance.



As a State party to the Ottawa Convention, Bangladesh remains concerned over the continued use of anti-personnel mines, including by neighboring Myanmar.

Since 2017, we drew the Committee's attention to the use of anti-personnel mines by the Myanmar authority against their own people, including the forcibly displaced Rohingya community who took shelter in Bangladesh fleeing persecution. The report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission repeatedly mentioned Myanmar's extensive "use of landmines at the border". This is one of the reasons preventing voluntary repatriation of the Rohingyas. Unfortunately, outright denial to such a fact-based report remains the only response from Myanmar.

We reiterate our call to the Myanmar authorities to take urgent necessary steps to ensure mine clearance, declare a moratorium on the production of landmines, and end civilian casualties.

**Mr. Chair,**

Rapid technological development, including artificial intelligence and biotechnology, continues to redefine the nature of our disarmament discourse. ICT has brought immense benefits to our peoples. But our increasing dependence on digital technologies, more so due to the pandemic, has created new vulnerabilities. The growing malicious use of ICTs, by both state and non-state actors, are endangering international security in our



highly digitized world. Such actors are even exploiting the global health crisis by targeting critical establishments necessary for mitigating this pandemic.

No government can tackle these challenges alone. Bangladesh strongly rejects the illegal or malicious use of ICTs, including social networks, for purposes that are inconsistent with the objectives of maintaining international stability and security.

Therefore, the need for the UN to continue its norm-setting role for a globally accessible, free, open, and secured cyberspace is now more than ever. Bangladesh remains steadfast to contribute to safeguarding ICTs from malicious activities.

**Mr. Chair,**

We are committed to a peaceful, safe, sustainable, open, and accessible outer space environment. With the launch of the Bangabandhu-1 satellite, Bangladesh now has an enhanced stake in preventing an arms race in outer space. While trust and confidence-building measures can be useful for preventing the weaponization of outer space, there is no denying the importance of concluding a legally binding international instrument for this.

We also need to scale up our efforts towards capacity building of developing countries to contribute to the discourse and developments in the outer space sphere in an inclusive and transparent manner.



**Mr. Chair,**

We remain committed to upholding internationally agreed disarmament norms and strengthening the UN disarmament machinery. We reiterate the importance of convening the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament (SSOD-IV) for giving further impetus to the disarmament machinery in an evolving and complex global context.

Bangladesh also calls for increased participation of women in disarmament discourses – both at the national and global levels- to advance the women, peace, and security agenda.

**Mr. Chair,**

The pandemic has taught us that it is development not armament that can ensure global peace and security. We should be able to apply this lesson in the disarmament domain. As a nation in development transition, Bangladesh has legitimate interest in advocating for channelling the massive resources deployed for arms build-up to priorities of sustainable development and sustaining peace. Unfortunately, that is not happening. Last year, the world rather saw the biggest spike in military spending in a decade. We must work towards reversing this trend. This year, in the face of challenges of COVID-19, we are in greater need of resources to build back better. We urge for repurposing military expenditure cuts to address the new challenges brought about by the pandemic particularly in the fields of education and health.



We believe that despite enormous challenges, stalemates, and painstakingly slow progress in their works, the UN disarmament machinery remains the best way to chart a way forward to achieve our shared goals. To underpin our engagement in the UN, we should redouble our efforts to strengthen all the disarmament and arms control regimes, to ensure a safer and better world for our future generations.

I thank you.