

“Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow”
Remarks Gitanjali Singh, Head of Office, a.i, UN Women Bangladesh
International Women’s Day 2022¹

Honourable Minister of Education, Dr. Dipu Moni, MP

Honourable Members of Parliament

Today’s chair, Director General, Department of Women’s Affairs, Ms. Farida Pervin,

Additional Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Mr. Mohibuzaman,

Distinguished guests from the government, civil society, women’s movement, development partners, media and the UN.

Good afternoon

On behalf of UN Women, it is an absolute pleasure to join you in today’s international women’s day celebrations.

As Bangladesh celebrates 50 years of independence, we must celebrate the progress made on women’s empowerment and gender equality. Bangladesh continues to be the top performer in the South Asian region on gender equality.

¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw66-2022>

In the last few decades, Bangladesh has achieved significant gains in girls' education at both the primary and secondary level. The government has stepped up legislative reform, policy adoption, and scaled up programmes to advance gender equality. Maternity and paternity provisions to address the disproportionate burden of unpaid and domestic work on women have been strengthened, by the introduction of the child daycare center bill 2021. Social protection programmes have been escalated, women's representation in the parliament and local government institutions has been improving. The government has also strategically integrated gender equality into SDG localization and implementation. The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022 -2026 is aligned with the 8th Five Plan vision and priorities and includes a dedicated focus on gender equality and eliminating gender-based violence and prioritizes gender mainstreaming across all our efforts.

The last two years with the COVID 19 pandemic and the socio-economic crisis, it has unleashed, have been extremely challenging. We have seen a resurgence in gender-based violence, the care burden for women has exploded and so many women in the informal sector have lost jobs. We have witnessed how rapidly the clock on women's empowerment and women's rights can start skipping backwards. We cannot afford to be complacent and emerge out of the pandemic with a reversal in these gender equality gains.

The year 2022 is pivotal for achieving gender equality in the context of climate change, and environmental and disaster risk reduction. The climate crisis and gender inequality are two of the greatest global challenges of the twenty-first

century. Without gender equality today, a sustainable future, **and** an equal future, remains beyond our reach.

This year's international women's day observance is in recognition and celebration of the women and girls who are leading the charge on climate change adaptation and response, and to honour their leadership and contribution towards a sustainable future. We must pause, to salute the leadership of women across sectors and applaud their resilience, perseverance, courage and innovative spirit in supporting the recovery from the pandemic in their families and communities.

Ladies and gentlemen, for women to be at the heart of climate action, environment, and disaster risk reduction, we need to understand three key points:

One, the climate crisis is **NOT** a "gender neutral" global crisis. Women and girls experience, the greatest impacts of climate change.

Two, women and girls are **essential, effective, leaders and change-makers** and must be included in the design and implementation of climate action. Without their leadership, knowledge, and participation in climate response today, it is unlikely **that** solutions for a sustainable planet and a gender equal world tomorrow will be realized.

Three, women and girls are taking climate and environment action at all levels, **but their voice, agency, and participation are often under-supported, under-resourced, under-valued and under-recognized**. We must shift the climate

discourse from one of helping the vulnerable, to one of empowering women and girls and addressing past gender inequalities as fundamental drivers of risk in the climate change context.

Bangladesh has been a champion and front runner on disaster risk reduction. It has been appreciated and acknowledged internationally for integrating gender equality in its disaster risk reduction actions. The Delta Plan, the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan, the National Plan for Disaster Management and the National Resilience Programme (NRP II), present unique opportunities to advance these gains further with a focus on the priorities of rural women, climate resilient infrastructure and increased gender responsive financing.

There are six solutions that can place gender equality at the centre of all climate change actions:

- **We must integrate gender perspectives** into climate, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies, and programmes.
- **We must promote women's and girls' full and equal participation and leadership** to achieve real change led by women. Representation matters.
- **We must build resilience** of women and girls and their organizations
- **We must increase financing** for gender-responsive climate, environmental and disaster risk initiatives, supporting women's organizations, enterprises, and cooperatives
- **We must improve and invest in gender specific statistics** and data to amplify the relationship between gender and climate

- **We must support and finance gender-responsive just transitions** with care for people and the planet at the centre, upholding human rights and the principle of leaving no one behind.

UN Women looks forward to working with all our partners, the committed Government of Bangladesh, the vibrant women's movement, the dynamic civil society and private sector and the dedicated development partners to advance women's leadership, to achieve women's rights and to build a sustainable tomorrow based on values of substantive equality and non-discrimination.

I end with a quote from the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, I quote *"As a matter of justice, equality, morality and plain common sense, we need to turn the clock forward on women's rights."* End quote.

The time for action is now.

Thank you.