



MEDIA RELEASE

Government reaffirms commitment to greater political voice for women

Dhaka, 4 May 2005: The Government reaffirmed its international commitment to increasing women's political representation in Bangladesh at a workshop, organized jointly by the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in Dhaka earlier today.

The workshop took place at the Sheraton Hotel and provided representatives of Municipalities, Union Parishads, City Corporations, and Members of Parliament an opportunity to become more familiar with the importance of women's participation in national and local decision-making as well as to be acquainted with women's political roles and rights and to be aware of the importance of gender policies and laws.

Despite making up almost half the national population, women are currently under represented in Bangladesh politics, holding only two percent of seats in parliament. At the local level, while women are elected to government, in many cases they are excluded from management committees. As a result of these factors, the concerns of nearly half the citizens of the nation are often overlooked.

Consecutive governments have taken several positive measures to promote women's political rights, however the implementation of related policies remains weak. Meanwhile, a number of international commitments to advance women's rights in Bangladesh have also been made by consecutive governments. Most recently the Government reported on the progress made attaining the Millennium Development Goals, which is a series of eight time-bound development objectives. Among the targets is a commitment to increase women's participation in national decision-making.

During the workshop, participants made recommendations for supporting women to gain the confidence to participate more fully and equally in the local and national political life and to ensure the Legal Rights of women are safeguarded. These recommendations are expected to shape initiatives targeted at meeting national commitments under the Millennium Development Goals and the National Action Plan for the empowerment of women. The Minister of Law and Parliamentarian Affairs was the Chief Guest and Assistant Resident Representative, Dr. Najmus Sadiq, represented UNDP.

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