

Statement by
H.E. Mr. M. Shameem Ahsan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh
at the Panel Discussion on Climate Change and the rights of the child
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Thank you Mme Moderator.

This panel discussion today provides an important opportunity to discuss how climate change impacts on the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of the child. It is expected to deepen our understanding of the adverse effects of climate change and identify ways of combating them.

Human rights and climate change nexus has been quite well elaborated in previous panel discussions of the Council. They showed how human rights as enshrined in international human rights instruments are deeply influenced by climate change. These influences are more severe when they affect the most vulnerable groups in a society. Through livelihood analysis of potential climate change impacts, it is seen that the most vulnerable groups within communities are also the poorest. And even among the poor, most vulnerable are women, children, elderly and the sick. It is therefore quite likely that adverse impacts of climate change will fall disproportionately on these most vulnerable groups within a country as a whole as well as within vulnerable regions of the country.

For the vulnerable groups, considering their varying circumstances and the interrelated, indivisible and interdependent nature of human rights, implications of climate change run wider and deeper. In effect, climate change creates a domino effect – first damaging the natural system and then subsequently disrupting the social, economic, cultural and political system. With rise in temperature come varieties of natural disasters, change in the patterns of rainfall and sea level rise – all cause low crop yields, fresh drinking water and sanitation crisis, spread of communicable and non-communicable diseases, severe malnutrition, school drop outs, forced labour, loss of life and livelihoods often leading to huge expenditure on public health and other account. Climate change, therefore, severely constrains states' capacity to ensure children's right to enjoy highest attainable standard of health and health services (Art-24, CRC), right to social security (Art-26, CRC), right to education (Art-28, & 29, CRC), right to be protected from economic exploitation resulting from the interference with the child's education (Art-32, CRC), and above all, their right to life (Art-6, CRC).

In case of small, low-lying island developing states, these society-wide changes may engender conflict, violence and even mass displacement. Underlying are year-to-year and cumulative weather-related losses and damages to lives, natural resources and livelihoods dependent on land and water resources. They also weaken social fabric and in extreme cases, undermine stability and threaten survival of the people and disappearance of entire national territory. In absence of adequate global climate action, such situations would be sure recipe for more violence and conflict to which children being unprotected would be the worst victims. For countries with lower economic resilience, these eventualities critically hinder their efforts to attain the Sustainable development Goals – particularly No. 2, 3, 4, 8, 11, 13 and 16. Regretfully, most climate vulnerable countries, including my own, suffer the most though contributing the least to the cause. Hence, ambitious climate action is more needed today than ever.

It is re-assuring though that the Paris Agreement- ‘the game changer’ in the language of many –truly has the potential to relieve these grave concerns over time. It is encouraging that the Agreement aims to ‘pursue efforts to limit the temperature rise well below 1.5 deg C’. Another striking feature is the nationally determined contributions which follows the bottom-up approach. Now, as the Paris Agreement clearly states that all climate action are to be taken *respecting, promoting and considering* respective obligations on human rights, for states it creates scope to undertake all such actions, namely Adaptation, Mitigation, Finance, Transfer of technology and capacity-building *in line with the Art 3 of the CRC*. Let us now see how Bangladesh viewed all this.

For mitigation action, through its Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs), Bangladesh adopted energy security policy putting in place the Solar Homes Programme. This provided off-grid electricity access to rural areas and extended length of study period for children. It also targets scaling up the potential of Solar Irrigation Pumps, Solar mini and nano grids to address energy access issue for off-grid population to increase agricultural productivity ensuring food security for vulnerable groups such as children. These are some examples of mitigation measures with adaptation co-benefits keeping children in the focus.

Bangladesh also designed its Climate Change Strategy on Adaptation keeping particularly in view the needs and vulnerability of children. Use of cyclone shelters as makeshift school so that children could continue schooling as much as possible is an example.

Keeping these in view, we may consider the following as possible entry points for further action in the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC:

- that the INDCs comprise all climate actions keeping children in focus and are adequate and progressively ambitious.

- that the 'loss and damage' mechanism adequately responds to human rights obligations, particularly in the context of the rights of the child.
- that protection of children with regard to displacement is adequately and appropriately addressed in the work of task force established by the Warsaw International Mechanism.

It is also important that in discharging their obligation, states ensure responsible conduct by businesses, not only in emission reduction but in making resources available for climate adaptation to protect children's rights.

Another practical issue is access to and affordability of medicine. To facilitate proper implementation of the Paris Agreement, states may take advantage of the latest amendment to WTO TRIPS Agreement in order to better realize right to health of children and reduction of child and maternal mortality.

Though climate change has devastating impact on states' effort to realize the rights of the children, we hope, with powerful instruments like Paris Agreement and SDGs and with required political will states will act on all relevant fronts.

Thank you.

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