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4th Session of the Forum on Minority Issues

Intervention of Permanent Mission of Bangladesh

Thank you Madam Chair.

Bangladesh is home to diverse religious and ethnic minority groups living in complete harmony for generations. It is a country of about 160 million people, 9 percent of which are Hindus and the other religious and ethnic minorities constitute about one percent. According to Population Census ~~2001~~, the male/female ratio is 103.8.

The government <sup>of Bangladesh</sup> is committed to ensuring welfare of its people irrespective of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language and culture. Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Buddhists share a relationship of mutual respect, and are free to practice their own religion and culture.

The government has taken numerous measures aimed at promoting development of the minority groups. There are different welfare trusts for people belonging to the Hindu, the Buddhist, and the Christian religion. The government has introduced many programmes and projects for empowering minorities and women, that includes quota system in employment, in education and in various local government institutions. There are 3 (three) seats for women in each of the Hill District Councils. Two of these seats are earmarked for minority women belonging to ethnic minorities. Two seats are also allocated for ethnic minority women in the Regional Council in Chittagong Hill Tracts region.

The government has also undertaken a <sup>Vulnerable Group Development</sup> ~~VGD~~ programme for the ultra-poor aiming to enhance productivity of ultra-poor, vulnerable women.

The government attaches <sup>great</sup> importance to improving the quality of life and human rights of all minority groups including those from ethnic minority backgrounds. IN addition to general allocations, Special development

allocations are provided for the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which is mostly inhabited by ethnic minorities.

The government has also allocated funds for Test Relief (food-grain) and Gratuitous Relief (cash) for marginalised people including women living in the hill districts to help them through lean agricultural periods, food deficits and natural disasters.

The government has taken special measures for ensuring housing for all disadvantaged population in its poverty strategic paper for the Fiscal year 2009-2011.

Madam Chair, the Constitution of Bangladesh upholds the rights of minorities in Bangladesh. The present government's commitment to the empowerment and welfare of the minorities is based on the core ethos of a secular democracy.

*While*  
*development of the state of* As the government acknowledges the challenges it is facing with regard to *the* minority women in Bangladesh, *at the same time* the government reiterates its commitment in promoting and protecting rights and participation of minority women.

Thank you.