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**REMARKS
BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
OPENING CEREMONY
VOA TOWN HALL MEETING ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT
CENTRAL LIBRARY HALL
BEGUM ROKEYA UNIVERSITY, RANGPUR
APRIL 10, 2014**

Professor Dr. AKM Nurun Nabi, Vice Chancellor of Begum Rokeya University

Advocate Sultana Kamal, Executive Director of Ain O Salish Kendra

Roquia Haider, Chief, VOA Bangla Service, Washington, D.C.

Colleague and Friend USAID Mission Director Janina Jaruzelski

... and all of you who believe ...

... all of you who believe like U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry believes ... like Janina and I believe ...like all of you believe ...

... “no nation can develop if you leave half the people behind” ...

... this we all believe or we would not be here...

Asalamu aleikum, nameskar, and good morning

Take a look at these eyes ...

Can you see these eyes?

These eyes are old and they have seen so much ...

... and they even still work!

Since 1970 ... 44 years ago ... these eyes have lived mostly in the developing world, the emerging countries of central and southern Africa and of South Asia ... Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Here in wonderful Bangladesh these eyes ... these very eyes that you are looking at ... have crisscrossed Bangladesh from Tetulia to Teknaf, from Sylhet to Satkhira on a continuing quest to see firsthand the wonder and beauty of Bangladesh both in its people and in its villages, towns, cities and breathtaking countryside.

Everywhere ... in Africa, in South Asia, all about Bangladesh ... these eyes see the same thing ... something simple ... something critically important...

Everywhere these eyes travel ...

... everywhere ... these eyes see the power of women ... women ... women who are the backbone of their families ... women who are the backbone of their communities ... women who are indeed the backbone of their nations.

These eyes have seen over the many decades that if you are serious about development, about improving the quality of life for all the people, then you must be serious about working with women ...

... then you must be serious about working with women ...

... that's the bottom line: Development, progress, building a better life for the children and the family are all driven by women.

Women are the change makers ...

Let me repeat the words of my boss Secretary of State John Kerry: "No country can get ahead if it leaves half of its people behind."

Bangladesh, of course, understands this ...

... and that is why we are all here today at this town hall meeting ...

... and that is why we are all participating in this Gender and Development Fair ...

... that is why these journalists have undertaken training so they can better tell the story of how women build families, communities, nations ...

... and that is why America is proud to help make these events happen.

Together Bangladeshis seek to explore how best to empower women ... to unleash their talents, their energy, their creativity, their entrepreneurial drive ... so they can play their critical part in building the middle income Bangladesh of our shared vision ...

... a Bangladesh where all have the means to provide their families safe housing, ample, nutritious food, good healthcare, quality education.

This is no empty dream ... no ... such a Bangladesh can be reality if all Bangladeshis ... men and women alike ... are empowered to build ... and build ... and build this wonderful nation, using every skill, every talent, every idea, every entrepreneurial initiative, every drop of energy ...

Then Sonar Bangla of Tagore's vision and dreams ... then the Sonar Bangla of yesterday's dreams becomes the Sonar Bangla of today's reality.

Thank you.

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**As prepared for delivery*