

**Embassy of Bangladesh  
The Hague**

**Press Release**

**International Women's Day of a different kind in the Netherlands**

08 March 2019, The Hague: The Embassy of Bangladesh, The Hague in association with Aerofit organized a discussion meeting on “Making their Presence Felt” as part of observing the International Women's Day on March 6, 2019 as well as other activities aiming at wellness of women. Conducted by Dr. Dilruba Nasrin, spouse of the Ambassador of Bangladesh to the Netherlands, the program was attended among others by spouses of the Ambassadors of United Kingdom, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Iran, South Africa, Afghanistan, Belarus, Lithuania, Rwanda, Ambassador of Uruguay, and few Dutch friends.

02. Welcoming the dignitaries to the event, Dr. Nasrin expressed her solidarity with all the oppressed women of the world and underscored the need for identifying the challenges faced by those distressed women all around the world as part of celebrating this year's “international women day”. Mentioning the theme of this year's International Women's Day -“Balance for better”, she told that this is a day to reflect on how far we have come and how far we still have to go to truly achieve gender equality.

03. Dr. Nasrin made a presentation on “Women Empowerment in Bangladesh” showing Bangladesh as a role model of women empowerment. Referring to Global Gender Gap Report 2018 published by The World Economic Forum, she informed that Bangladesh ranked 48<sup>th</sup> in the world which put Bangladesh above countries like USA, Italy, Austria, Croatia, Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Singapore, etc. She also conveyed them that Bangladesh has closed over 72% of its overall gender gap with advances in every aspect of economic opportunity and participation, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. Appreciating the contribution of Bangladeshi women in mainstream economic activities, Dr. Nasrin also told that Bangladesh's economic transformation was driven, in large part, by social changes, under the visionary leadership of a women leader, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, whom the world came to know as “Mother of Humanity” for her role in providing shelter to over a million displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar.

04. Dr. Nasrin, as a contrast, showed the flights of Rohingyas who fled to Bangladesh since August 2017 after Myanmar Security forces forcibly displaced them. Among Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar, almost 52% are Women of both Adult and Non-Adult. The current crisis has turned Cox's Bazar as the largest refugee shelter of the world. It was also informed that women and girls have experienced severe sexual and gender based violence, perpetrated by both the Myanmar army and by local Rakhines. A video on sufferings of Rohingya women and children was also played before them.

05. Dr. Nasrin, on global perspective informed the audience that globally, over 2.7 billion women are legally restricted from having the same choice of jobs as men. Of 189 economies assessed in 2018, 104 economies still have laws preventing women from working in specific jobs, 59 economies have no laws on sexual harassment in the workplace, and in 18 economies, husbands can legally prevent their wives from working. About the voting rights of women, she gave a statistics which reveals that women suffrage was achieved in the Netherlands in 1919 where as it was 1944 for France and 2011 for Saudi Arabia while Bangladeshi women got their right to vote since the birth of the country in 1971.

06. Finally, it was suggested that Women need to take action for their rights by themselves and strongly raise their voices about equality in order to separate herself from the traditional paradox that woman is a commodity to be kept at home. Moreover, the power relations between husbands

and wives would become more evenly balanced if wives start gaining access to economic resources through paid employment. Better livelihoods help women gain greater bargaining ability, become more independent in taking personal and household decisions, overcome spousal resistance, leading to influence the cause of gender inequality.

07. An hour long wellness session was also organized at Aerofit Health Centre where professional health experts provided training and tips on how women should take care of their health.

08. The program ended with serving traditional Bangladeshi foods.