



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

8 EAST 65th STREET – NEW YORK, NY 10021 – (212) 879-8600

**Presentation of Pakistan's
combined Initial, Second and Third Periodic Report**

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

By

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22 May, 2007

Please check against delivery

Introductory Statement of Pakistan

**Madam Chairperson of the UN CEDAW Committee,
distinguished members of the Committee
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is my privilege to represent the Government of Pakistan to discuss the combined initial, 2nd and 3rd periodic report of our country in this august forum and to further apprise the Committee on Pakistan's commitment and progress in implementing our obligations in accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Madam Chairperson, honorable members of the Committee

Let me assure you that the Islamic Republic of Pakistan takes all its obligations and commitments very seriously, including the ones that address the position of our women, and that empower them socially, economically and legally.

Before we proceed further, I would like to introduce members of my delegation. Our delegation comprises six members including Ms. Parveen Qadir Agha, a development consultant and former secretary of the Ministry of Women Development, Mr. Syrus Qazi, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Huma Chughtai, a legal and gender expert currently working with German Technical Cooperation, GTZ's Capacity Building of the Ministry of Women Development Project as National Technical Expert, Ms. Mehrene Ishaq, an accomplished lawyer, Syed Zafar Hasan Mahmood, Project Coordinator, Ministry of Women Development's CEDAW Project, and myself Mahmood Salim Mahmood, Secretary Ministry of Women Development.

Madam Chairperson and distinguished members of the Committee

I would now like to start by giving a glimpse of Pakistan's socio economic context as it primarily affects our interaction and service delivery to the women of Pakistan. While giving an overview of Pakistan's endeavors towards enhancing the status of Pakistani women, I will also update this august Committee about the latest initiatives and measures taken by our government in this regard.

Pakistan is a populace country of 153.45 million people, out of which 97% are Muslims while 3% comprise Christian, Hindus, Parsis, Sikhs and others.

Women comprise 49% of the total population.

The Constitution guarantees equal rights for all its citizens without any discrimination on the basis of cast, colour, sex, or race.¹ It further ensures full participation of women in all spheres of national life.

Madam Chairperson and distinguished members of the Committee

It is with these laid out constitutional provisions of our country that Pakistan went ahead to sign CEDAW. The sole intention was and is to reaffirm our commitment to women empowerment in our country and to hold ourselves accountable before the world community.

Government of Pakistan continues to work towards empowering its women in all spheres of life. Despite these efforts, however, unfortunate incidents do take place at times on account of deep-rooted tribal and traditional mindsets. Pakistan is mindful of these constraints and is committed to overcome them. The accession to the CEDAW has reinforced government's resolute in this regard.

¹ (Articles 25, 27, 34, 35 and 37)

Madam Chairperson, distinguished members of the Committee

I will now take the opportunity to highlight some specific measures and affirmative actions that the Government of Pakistan has taken to eliminate discrimination against women and to empower them;

These measures are at policy, administrative and institutional levels.

In 1998, following the 'Beijing Platform, a 'National Plan of Action' (NPA) was launched that touched upon all '12 Areas of Concern'. A thirteenth area of concern regarding women with disabilities was added later. This was done by the Ministry of Women Development in close collaboration with UNDP under Gender Equality Umbrella Project (GEUP).

- The NPA establishes a set of priority action formulated to help achieve the agenda for the empowerment of women in Pakistan. Prepared on the basis of national participatory process, involving Federal and Provincial Governments, NGOs, Women Organizations and individual experts, the NPA aims to facilitate women's participation in all spheres of life besides ensuring protection of their rights within the family and the society.

Later, in the year 2002, the first National Policy was announced by the Government

- The **First National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women** was formulated on 7th March 2002 by the President of Pakistan; It is a statement of intent of the GoP that elaborates key policy measures for social, economic, and political empowerment of women;

Excellencies,

A number of **Measures** have been undertaken by the GoP in compliance with this National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women. These can be broadly

categorized as social and legal as well as institutional reforms. I would highlight the following few:

Social & Legal Measures

Violence against women (VAW) is a global concern that is entrenched in a stereotypical mindset. Pakistan is no exception. Traditional mindset, as you are aware, are difficult to change. Affirmative actions taken in this regard, therefore, aim at creating a conducive environment to bring about the necessary attitudinal change.

National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women specifically contains a **section on violence against women (VAW)**. It emphasizes on:

- ✓ Adopting a zero tolerance policy regarding violence against women;
- ✓ Declaring “honor killing” as murder;
- ✓ Reviewing and revising police and medico legal procedures;
- ✓ Introducing positive legislation on domestic violence and reform;
- ✓ Reviewing government policies for women’s shelters, and improving shelters for women in both public and private sectors, and promoting direct interaction and cooperation of all institutions/departments;
- ✓ Establishing family protection programmes at district level that provide women legal and psychological counseling and referrals to medical and legal aid mechanisms;
- ✓ Sensitizing all the police force on issues of VAW;

In compliance with the Policy of ZERO Tolerance on Violence Against Women (VAW), the Government of Pakistan is determined to deal strictly with the issue. It is striving to create an environment of Zero Tolerance on VAW. As a consequence, following measures have been taken:

- i. Law against “Honour Killing” has been passed by the Parliament, called “Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2004”;
- ii. “Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act 2006” deleting/amending the much debated Hudood Ordinances, has been passed;
- iii. SAARC Convention on Trafficking in Women has been ratified;
- iv. Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance 2002 has been passed;
- v. “Prevention of Anti Women Practices Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill 2007”, is under review of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly;
- vi. With government and civil society alliance, Sexual Harassment at work places, both at the government and private sector has been made a grave misconduct and punishable offence under the Cabinet’s decision; A draft code of conduct for gender justice at workplace has also been designed with the assistance of a local NGO² working on the issue.
- vii. The original Citizenship Act of 1951 was amended in year 2000, providing for nationality to the children of foreigner spouses;
- viii. A Bill on Domestic Violence is under construction; As we speak here, the Standing Committee on Ministry of Women Development in the National Assembly has submitted its report to the august house;

➤ In addition to the above, further initiatives have been taken to support the efforts of the GoP in assisting/facilitating women victims of violence:

- ✓ **Gender Crime Cell** has been created by the Ministry of Interior in the National Police Bureau to monitor and address all sorts of crimes against women on regular basis;
- ✓ A **Human Rights Wing** is working under the Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights to monitor and address the human rights violations and trends in the country with special reference to women;

² Alliance Against Sexual Harassment at the Workplace (AASHA)

- ✓ **Monitoring Committees:** The Ministry of Women Development (MoWD), in concert with the provincial and district governments has set up Federal, provincial and district level Monitoring Committees for implementing key policy measures. These Policy Monitoring Committees are functional since 2003-04 at the federal and provincial levels (in 32 districts); In addition, a Women's Rights Section is established to coordinate on all matters relating to women's rights.
- ✓ **Separate Complaint Cells:** To facilitate abused women and female victims of crime and violence, separate complaint cells have been established in the existing Police stations headed by women police officers, where women can go and report cases. Round the clock service is available.
- ✓ Specifically to monitor and establish an institutionalized follow-up of cases of violence at the highest level, a **Federal Cabinet Committee** has been formed. The Committee is mandated to regularly examine, monitor and report position status on the subject to the Cabinet. There is also a **National Committee on Prevention of Violence Against Women**, headed by the Interior Minister and assisted by the Gender Crime Cell to monitor the Gender based crimes.
- ✓ **Free legal aid** to women through the government run Women Centers. An institutionalized broad-based system is being conceptualized under the Access to Justice Program that, once conceived would be introduced as a pilot project. Meanwhile, for protection of women's rights, we are expanding the network of Women Centers and Shelters at district levels and include giving legal and social support mechanism to the women in need.
- ✓ **Induction of Women Police Officers** on the prosecution side, especially in gender based crimes is being encouraged wherever possible.
- ✓ The District Sessions Judge is mandated now to call for a **judicial inquiry in all custodial rape cases.**
- ✓ Crimes involving females are to be investigated by a **Female Police Investigating Officer** where available. Hence, to meet the objectives, more and more women are being encouraged to join the police service;

- ✓ Around **1300 women** languishing in jails for crimes other than terrorism and murder were **released from the jails on bail** in the year 2006, under the Law Reforms Ordinance, 2006.

Madam Chairperson, distinguished members of the Committee,

I would now like to touch upon some of the **institutional reforms** undertaken by the government in recent years;

- With government's vision of improving the conditions of Pakistani women and the growing responsibility and tasks involved in realizing this objective, the Federal Ministry for Women Development Ministry is now more focused on women issues and assumes greater scope and mandate in this regard. At provincial level, Women's Development Departments (WDD) are functioning with similar focus.
- A **National Commission on Status of Women** has been established in year 2000, with a mandate to examine the relevance and efficacy of all policies, programs and measures to the core issue of women development and gender equality.
- A recently launched **Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP)** is the largest project on portfolio of the MoWD. Approved by the Federal Cabinet in May 2005, GRAP is mandated to undertake a coherent gender reform agenda through phased implementation process with particular focus on gender mainstreaming. GRAP envisages reforms in the following key areas: -
 - i. Political Participation by Women
 - ii. Institutional Restructuring.
 - iii. Women Employment in Public Sector.
 - iv. Policy, Budgeting and Public Expenditure Mechanism (Gender Responsive)
 - v. Related Capacity Building Interventions.

Despite being in its nascent stage, GRAP has already set up gender units in nine line ministries, and is in the process of developing a sound Monitoring and Evaluation system.

In this process of institutional development, it may be pertinent to mention about **Jail Reforms** having special focus on female victims. These reforms include setting up of separate women jails, improving the physical environment, staff conditions, and the protection of women and juveniles from abuse and their eventual rehabilitation. Gender sensitization is being undertaken, inter alia, by including gender aspects in the curriculum of the police training colleges.

Access to Justice Program (AJP) is a comprehensive plan being implemented by the government through assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Major focus of this program includes institutional reforms, delay reduction in the courts and **Gender and Justice**. These main components aim at addressing women's access to justice as litigants, and their concerns as lawyers and judges. Some of the achievements in this program include setting up of information kiosks in the courts and constructing waiting areas and basic amenities like washrooms in the court complexes.

With assistance from the UNDP a three year long project on **Gender Mainstreaming**, has been launched by the Government through the Planning & Development Division. The Project developed gender-screening tools for the stakeholders and has trained public sector officials in gender sensitization and gender mainstreaming.

Being mindful of the need to develop **gender responsive budgeting** the Government expressed its support in the draft of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan and the Finance Department, Government of Punjab with the support of the Gender Responsive Budgeting Initiative (GRBI) project, have incorporated various gender-sensitive amendments in the government's Medium Term Budgetary Framework (MTBF) Budget Call Circular (2007-08). This budget call circular will be used by the three pilot GRB ministries – Education, Health

and Population Welfare- as well as by 12 other ministries that have so far been included under the incremental MTBF reform. These amendments, honorable members of the Committee, not only demonstrate the commitment of the government for gender responsive budgeting but would also go a long way in institutionalizing the gender perspective in the government's established budgetary forms and procedures.

With all the on going programs and plans of the government, the need to build the capacity of implementing machinery/ministry and other stakeholders has become necessary. Many international donors are assisting the Government of Pakistan in building its capacity with ongoing local and international trainings. Ministry of Development with its increased role is being assisted by such international organizations as the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), UNIFEM, UNFPA, and the UNDP etc.

Madam Chairperson, distinguished members of the Committee

From some of the above mentioned initiatives of the government, you have a fair idea that we are determined to empower Pakistani women and to include them in the development of our country. We are endeavouring to take all possible affirmative actions in this regard. Our government remains committed to ensure provision of justice and security to the women so that they can lead their lives with respect and dignity.

Some of the major challenges in empowering women are lack of capacity and low literacy rate amongst the women in Pakistan. You will be glad to know that this impediment is being removed and addressed on high priority basis having resulted in positive indicators. The overall literacy rate during 2005 has been estimated at 53%, with 65% of males and 40% females. Pakistan's recent affirmative and committed initiatives in the education sector like the '**Education Sector Reforms Action Plan (ESR)**', 2001-05 and '**National Plan of Action on Education for All**', 2001-15 have, however, shown upward trends. This can be gauged through the fact that over 79% of pupils, starting Grade-1, are reaching Grade-5, with noticeable improvement in the completion rates for girls from 65 to 76%, as currently estimated. The ESR has a special focus on Education

for All. Pakistan Millennium Development Goals Report (MDGs), 2004, jointly produced through local and international inputs of resources, reveals significant progress, like

- i) the ratio of girls to boys at all levels of education has improved (primary level from 0.51 during 1990-91 to 0.57 in 2003-04, while at secondary level from 0.50 to 0.64 and tertiary level from 0.46 to 0.78),
- ii) ratio of literate females to males (age group 15-24 years) has gone up from 0.51 to 0.65, and consequently registering significant improvement in the share of women in urban employment – as proxy indicator of share of women in wage employment in non agricultural sector.

In addition to the above, advocacy and awareness on concepts of human rights including gender equality and rights of the child have been incorporated in the school curricula.

With these positive trends and right policies in place, we are confident that soon the **girl child** of today will grow up as educated and prosperous young woman of Pakistan of tomorrow.

Madam Chairperson, distinguished members of the Committee

- **Economic empowerment of women** is the prime aspiration and priority of the government. We are all conscious of the fact that women are the poorest of the poor and the ‘poverty has a feminine face’.
- Pakistan launched its ‘Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper’ (PRSP) to alleviate poverty on priority basis. During the period 1999-2004, under PRSP framework, Pakistan’s economy gained significant strength, quality of life indicators showed visible improvements. This experience was further utilized in launching

Pakistan's 'Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) in line with the UN Summit decisions of September 2000.

- A number of income-generation projects, like 'Crop Maximization Project', 'Integration of Agricultural Research and Extension Activities', 'Introduction of Herbs as Crops', the 'Three-Year Training Program for Rearing Livestock and Dairy Animals' introduced since 2001 – 02 (under implementation) are expected to provide direct benefits to rural women. Similarly, under the 'National Fund for Advancement of Rural Women (Jafaquash Aurat) Project' with seed money of Rs. 100M, created by the President of Pakistan having special focus on rural women and the informal sector, nearly 23,000 women, covering 74,000 household are expected beneficiaries. The Fund is being operated through commercial banks like Khushhali & First Women Bank, and an illustrious NGO, Agha Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), simultaneously providing skill, employment and income, especially to rural women. Further, under the Micro Credit Scheme, launched only recently by the Ministry of Women Development, also operated through commercial banks, a new entrepreneurial class among disadvantaged poor women is being created.

Here, I would also like to mention that the **First Women's Bank**, is a unique bank in the world that is being run by the women for the women in particular. It aims at supporting women in providing micro credit schemes and also operates as any other regular commercial bank.

Honourable Members of the Committee, Madam Chairperson

Women employment schemes are being developed and many steps have been taken to facilitate their role in the development of the country at all levels; Some of the legal measures taken in this regard include:

- ✓ Ratification of Convention 100 of ILO on "Non Discrimination of wages on the basis of sex".

- ✓ Ministry of Labor and Manpower with assistance from the ILO has launched a project on “Women Employment Concerns and Working Conditions”. The Project aims at strengthening the capacity of women in Trade Unions, Chamber of Commerce;
- ✓ Minimum wage has been enhanced to RS 4000 per month during the financial year 2006-7. Katmandu Declaration signed by Pakistan is being instrumental in obliging the government to develop a policy and plan to address the issue of home based workers;
- ✓ GoP has allocated Rs. 100 million for the bonded laborers. This amount is being utilized for the on going implementation of the national policy and plan of action on bonded Labour;

As evidence of Government’s commitment to empower women in all walks of life, I would now like to share with you some of the recent unprecedented initiatives taken to support and encourage the working women at levels:

- ✓ The Governor State Bank of Pakistan is a renowned woman economist;
- ✓ Two women officers from the medical corps of Pakistan Army have been given the rank of major general;
- ✓ Young women are being recruited as commissioned officers in the armed forces. Two of them have even been awarded the swords of honour for their outstanding performance as trainees;
- ✓ 10% quota has been determined for women in the Central Superior Services as well as across the board in the public sector jobs.
- ✓ Special tax concessions are given to the salaried women at both public and private sector;
- ✓ Day-Care Centres have been set up for the children of working women at both public and private sector.

Madam Chairperson

With a forward looking Government in position, I once again reaffirm that Pakistan is fully committed to materialize women empowerment in all spheres, in letter and spirit. Conscious of the responsibility as a State-Party to CEDAW, Pakistan is actively pursuing a policy of gender mainstreaming through political, economic and social empowerment and gender equality in all its policies and programmes.

Enhancement of women's political representation at national and local levels facilitated women's presence and voice in law making and governance. Achievements in **Political Empowerment are unprecedented**. Providing placement of women in positions of decision-making, and their participation in electoral positions at Federal, Provincial, and Local levels under the Devolution Plan through the **Local Government Ordinance 2001** is considered as the watershed for political empowerment of women of Pakistan. It provides 33% representation of women at all tiers of local elected bodies (with 39,964 women working as councilors), and 231 women representing in Federal and Provincial Assemblies as Members of the Senate and the National and Provincial Assemblies on special women seats out of 1170 seats. In addition, the women can also contest elections on general seats. This has revolutionized political participation of women in Pakistan.

Establishment of '**Women Political Schools**' with bulk aid from the UNDP/international donor agencies and '**District Resource Centers**' for women are innovative projects infusing political vision and awareness amongst the women and preparing them to play greater and effective roles as public representatives in particular.

Honorable members of the Committee

I am pleased to inform that one of the major developments relating to the **advocacy of women rights** in Pakistan is the manner in which the Pakistani media has assumed its responsibility as defenders of women rights. Our Media is playing a positive role by

highlighting instances of violence against women and discriminatory practices prevalent in the society. Stereotypical roles of women depicted through the media in the past are now being challenged and women are now being portrayed in more diverse and constructive roles. This is being done under the GoP's policy that calls for a more balanced and positive portrayal of Pakistani women.

With an "Open Media" policy of the government many private channels have been launched focusing on various areas. One of such channels is owned and run by a woman. This channel - Hum TV - literally meaning "us" focuses on women issues.

Under an active awareness campaign, the Government has launched special programs including talk shows and dramas on women's rights and on elimination of all discriminatory practices affecting their rights through radio, television and other media.

While the incidences of crime are being increasingly reported, identification of victims of rape, adultery or violence or of their families has been prohibited in the media unless with the consent/permission of the victim.

Distinguished Members of the Committee

I would now like to touch upon the role of Judiciary in Pakistan in protecting the rights of the women.

Our judiciary is playing a pivotal role in our ongoing struggle for protecting women's rights in Pakistan. Indeed women's rights will remain a mirage unless backed up and upheld by a strong and sensitive judiciary. Conscious efforts are being made to further sensitize the judiciary on women's issues. In addition, women are being encouraged to join the legal and judicial profession and you would be pleased to know that more and more women are now enrolling in law schools and joining the profession. The curriculum of the Federal and Provincial Judicial Academies now includes a module on gender sensitization.

On its part, the judiciary has taken *suo-moto* cognizance of a number of incidents involving violence against women.

Distinguished Members,

The need to have a disaggregated authentic data is crucial for policy-making and implementation. A milestone in our effort for gender mainstreaming has been the creation of a gender sensitized statistical organization devoted to the compilation of a compendium on gender statistics providing foundation for policy formulation. The compendium has been printed and is also available on the website of the Federal Bureau of Statistics.

Madam Chairperson

Last but not the least, is the proactive role played by our civil society organizations and the NGO sector whose constant support, monitoring and constructive criticisms have rendered positive assistance to the government in its endeavors towards mainstreaming women and their empowerment. I would also like to acknowledge the role and support of international NGOs and donor agencies in their financial and technical support in assisting the government in this regard.

Madam Chairperson, distinguished members of the Committee

Before I finally conclude, I would like to share with you the process we have followed in preparing our **Report**. The process was transparent and participatory. All stakeholders were consulted and the report was prepared with all sincerity and honesty. It was made as comprehensive as possible. In case anything is found missing in the Report, the omission is inadvertent.

Despite all the above mentioned efforts already underway, we are mindful of the fact that much more needs to be done in achieving gender equality according to CEDAW. On behalf of the Government of Pakistan, I assure you of our commitment to the promotion and protection of women's rights under the CEDAW.

My delegation and I now welcome your questions.

Thank you