



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement

By

Ambassador Amjad Hussain B. Sial
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on Agenda Item 62: Advancement of Women

at the Third Committee of the 64th Session
of the United Nations General Assembly

New York
12 October 2009

**Statement by Pakistan on Agenda Item 62: Advancement of Women at the 64th Session
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Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of Pakistan delegation I thank the Secretary General for his timely and comprehensive reports on the advancement of women. These reports draw attention of the international community and the UN system to focus and implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to intensify efforts to eliminate trafficking in women and girls and rape and violence against women. These reports also emphasize national governments and the UN system to promote gender equality and mainstream gender perspectives into all policies and programmes.

2. We align ourselves with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Sudan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

3. Women form more than half of this world's population. Despite enormous technological advancement and human development, women continue to suffer discrimination and exclusion. They are discriminated against in jobs, access to finance, credit, capital markets and basic services. Their work, particularly in developing countries, remains restricted to informal sectors, unmeasured and less paid. Beyond equity considerations, the abilities of this major segment of society remains vastly unutilized. Women are vital contributors to the economic survival of poor households and overall economic output.

4. In this respect the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly remain the guiding policy framework for all of us. Two out of eight Millennium Development Goals are linked to women. However, we are concerned that despite many achievements in the advancement of women at the policy and political levels, significant progress to achieve MDG 3 and 5 is slow.

5. The recent global economic crisis has aggravated the feminization of poverty.

Mr. Chairman,

The persistence of violence against women in various parts of the world is a major impediment to women's social and economic uplift. The international community should keep on pursuing efforts through UN, to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

6. The UN reform process should give due consideration to the establishment of a new gender entity. At the same time we urge to develop more synergies between ongoing proposal of a new gender entity and intergovernmental process on system wide coherence.

Mr. Chairman,

7. The inspiration for gender equality and empowerment of women in Pakistan, comes from the vision of our founding father Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah who in 1948 said “No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you”.

8. The constitution of Pakistan guarantees the equality of all its citizens before law, irrespective of religion, caste, creed or gender.

9. Today women in Pakistan have shed all barriers of traditions and customs and participating in every walk of life. They are performing to the maximum —be it care giving, teaching, engineering, law, medicine, business, the police — or military.

10. Pakistan has the honour of electing Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto as the first woman Prime Minister of the Muslim world. In addition we proudly have the first woman Speaker of the National Assembly in South Asia, 17 women Senators (17% out of 100-member Upper House) and 76 women parliamentarians (22.5% out of 338 members of Lower House).

11. Adding to this list are several concrete measures taken by the democratic Government at both administrative and legal levels.

12. Those legal steps include Amendment in the Citizenship Act, promulgation of Criminal Law Amendment Act 2004, Law Reforms Ordinance 2006, and the historic adoption of the Protection of Women Act in 2006. The Protection of Women Act has been hailed as a milestone in the history of Pakistan as it seeks to eliminate century’s old exploitation and discrimination against women. Other measures can be listed as following:

One: A revolutionary Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) with the allocation of a substantial amount of Rs. 84 billion has been launched for an ambitious social and financial uplift of women. Under the programme, Rs. 1,000 per month will be distributed to each woman head of almost 4.5 million families.

Two: A comprehensive mega project “Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP)”, mandated to undertake a coherent gender reform agenda through phased

implementation processes, has been in place since past few years. The project has particular focus on gender mainstreaming.

Three: The initiative Benazir Bhutto Youth development programme has been introduced to encourage maximum participation of women in the workforce. It provides training to young people, particularly girls in various disciplines, accompanied by a monthly stipend during training.

Four: On violence against women the government has adopted a zero tolerance policy. For its prevention and timely response, a Gender Crime Cell has been established under the Ministry of Interior. It monitors and addresses crimes against women. In addition the network of Women Centres and Shelters for victims of violence at district levels is being expanded to include also legal and social support mechanisms.

Five: A bill on Protection against Harassment at Work Places is in process which will soon be presented before the National Assembly.

13. Taking forward the women agenda government is not alone in its efforts. Side by side standing is the private sector and media on forefront to promote awareness of women's rights and fight violence against women.

Mr. Chairman,

14. In conclusion, the goal of gender equality and women empowerment can only be achieved through international cooperation, and global partnerships. Unless financial resources are mobilized, through both domestic and international channels, across all social sectors, progress towards gender will remain limited.

15. The international community should honour its commitments to Official Development Assistance. It must commit to debt relief and the opening of markets to give opportunities particularly to women entrepreneurs. Increased development assistance in areas such as women education, health and job creation is vital towards eliminating gender disparities.

16. Empowerment of women across the world will ensure a more caring, tolerant, just and peaceful world for all.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.

