



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement by Pakistan
under Agenda Item 28:
“Advancement of Women”
at the Third Committee
of the United Nations General Assembly

12 October 2010

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Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly
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Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the distinguished representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We also thank the Secretary General for presenting a series of comprehensive reports on various aspects of the advancement of women. These are important reports indicating progress as well as shortcomings in our collective efforts to empower women in accordance with the standards agreed in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly. We agree with the Secretary General that violence against women and many other challenges are rooted in unequal power relations between men and women and that violence and discrimination against women constitute a major impediment to the ability of women to make full use of their capabilities.

While steps have been taken at national, regional and global levels including the UN system, to promote gender equality and mainstream gender perspectives into all policies and programmes, a lot still needs to be done. Women continue to be one of the most marginalized groups in our societies. Discrimination against them is a matter of serious concern as it undermines women's dignity, self esteem and deprives them of their full participation in all aspects of development.

We are hopeful that the recently established entity "UN Women" will contribute significantly towards achieving the goal of advancement and empowerment of women at all levels. Pakistan has been an ardent supporter of this entity from the beginning and would continue to extend its full support to realize its aims and objectives through active and meaningful participation. Pursuing our commitment to active participation, we have presented our candidature to the Executive Board of UN Women and look forward to the support of Member States in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

In Pakistan, despite challenges, we remain committed to the agenda of empowering women in all walks of life. Pakistan's Constitution guarantees equal rights for all its citizens without any discrimination on the basis of cast, colour, sex, or race. It further guarantees full participation of women in all spheres of national life.

Successive governments have taken steps to improve the lot of women in different sectors, eliminate discrimination from public and private sectors, hence, ensuring their gradual empowerment. Today women in Pakistan proudly participate in every facet of life, from home care to medical care, from business to armed forces and from policy making to law making.

Pakistan has the unique distinction of electing Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto as the first Women 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). A number of distinguished women serve as federal and provincial Ministers. Both public and private sectors are also filled with eminent women who prominently and proudly represent Pakistan in various fields. Even the UN system has benefitted from the work and experience of Pakistani women. Presently too there are three Pakistani women serving as UN Special Procedures.

The democratically elected Government in Pakistan is pursuing the agenda for women empowerment under a four pronged strategy, which includes: a) reducing feminization of poverty; b) promoting gender equality; c) ending violence against women; and d) introducing necessary legislative structure to empower women.

Pakistan's National Plan of Action to implement various commitments of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has been prepared on the basis of observations made by the CEDAW Committee on our last country report.

The National Commission on Status of Women was established in 2000, to examine the relevance and efficacy of all laws, policies, programmes and measures for women empowerment and gender equality. The process to make the Commission fully autonomous is underway.

We have recently adopted laws to protect the rights of women, which include the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2009 and Protection against Harassment at Workplace Bill 2009. The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act is under consideration. These legislative measures have been undertaken with the involvement of all stakeholders including the civil society organizations.

Another initiative taken for economic empowerment of women is the innovative scheme of Benazir Income Support Programme, which provides cash grants to female head of poor households. It improves her decision making role by allowing her to spend the grant as per her priorities. Another initiative is a Programme for the grant of State Land to poor women tenant farmers in the rural areas.

The National Commission for Human Development has helped gained functional literacy to over 2 million women in rural areas, which has significantly contributed to empowerment of these women. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and Medium Term Budgetary Framework have also incorporated various gender-sensitive amendments.

The Ministry of Women Development's "Gender Reform Action Plan" is aimed at undertaking a coherent gender reform agenda through phased implementation processes, including political participation, institutional restructuring, women employment in the public sector, and gender responsive policy and budgeting.

Efforts of the government in promoting women's rights are supported and multiplied by the private sector, our vibrant media and independent judiciary by providing opportunities, raising awareness and addressing violations.

Mr. Chairman,

The Beijing Platform remains the most comprehensive global policy framework for the full realization of gender equality, women's human rights and the empowerment of women and girls. The recent 15 year review has demonstrated that important progress had been made in some areas, most notably in global, regional and national policy development and in increased access for women and girls to education at all levels. However, disparities remained between regions and within countries across all 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform.

The recent global economic crisis has aggravated the feminization of poverty, which was highlighted in this review. The review also drew attention towards persistent gaps in implementation of the Platform that negatively affect progress in achieving the MDGs. With only five years left in 2015, we need to expedite efforts on the gender dimensions of all the MDGs to ensure their timely implementation.

In this regard sustained international cooperation and global partnerships are of vital importance. Financial resources must be mobilized, through domestic and international channels, across all social sectors to ensure progress. 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.

We must also not forget the women who are forced to suffer the consequences of armed conflicts and situations of foreign occupation. Their plight has been considered in many international forums over the last few years, but perpetrators of crimes against humanity continue to enjoy immunity under domestic Security Laws. Situation of these women facing double discrimination should not be forgotten and must be dealt by all relevant actors of the UN system.

Empowerment of women across the world in all situations, cultures and environments will ensure a more caring, tolerant, just and peaceful world for all.

I thank you Mr. Chairman,