



PAKISTAN

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Statement

by

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on

Agenda Item 28

Advancement of Women

Third Committee

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Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the distinguished representative of Argentine 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 reports reflect on the state of progress as well as further actions needed at various levels to empower women in accordance with the internationally agreed standards. As rightly pointed out by the Special Rapporteur, States must bear in mind that discrimination affects women in different ways depending on how they are positioned within the social, economic and cultural hierarchies that prohibit or further compromise certain women's ability to enjoy universal human rights.

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 across the geographical and development divides. 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.

The new UN Entity for gender equality and empowerment of women (UN Women) has taken a good start. Its Strategic Plan contains important and practical proposals towards achieving the goal of advancement and empowerment of women at all levels. Pakistan is a member of the Executive Board of UN Women and has worked constructively towards shaping this Strategic Plan. Together with the support of the Member States and other stakeholders we are hopeful that in due course, it would be able to make desired impact in the lives of women. We would continue to extend our full support to help UN Women realize its aims and objectives.

Mr. Chairman,

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. We remain committed to the agenda of empowering women in all walks of life.

Successive governments, in accordance with our international obligations, have taken steps to promote the rights of women in economic, social, political and cultural fields. Concrete steps are taken to 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.

Both public and private sectors are filled with eminent women who prominently and proudly represent Pakistan in various fields. A large number of women are members of the National and Provincial legislatures. They are also important members of the Cabinet including the Speaker of National Assembly, the Minister for Information and the Foreign Minister of Pakistan who headed the Pakistan delegation to the 66th Session of UNGA. At the local level, presence of over 28000 women councillors bears testimony to the fact that women are now active in the local governments and playing a vibrant role in legislative business. Even the UN system has benefitted from the work and experience of Pakistani women who work in different capacities including three serving UN Special Procedures.

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 structures to empower women. Our National Plan of Action is based on our international obligations deriving from CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action and 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. Presently, the Commission works with the Ministry of Human Rights.

We have recently adopted laws to protect the rights of women, which include the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2010 on sexual harassment and Protection against Harassment at Workplace Act 2010.

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 protects families from the negative effects of inflation and improves their decision making role by allowing them to spend the grant as per their 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 gain functional literacy to over 2 million women in rural areas, which has significantly

contributed to empowerment of these women. Government of Pakistan is also committed towards implementation of gender responsive budgeting to promote policies and resource allocations through gender perspective.

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,

Beijing Platform remains the most comprehensive global policy framework for the full realization of women's human rights. However, its 15year review conducted last year has demonstrated that despite progress in some areas, deficiencies remain in countries across all 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform. The review also drew attention towards persistent gaps in implementation of the Platform that negatively affect progress in achieving the MDGs. With only four 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.