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Pakistan's statement at the 55th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

New York
24 February 2011



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Commission on the Status of Women

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**Pakistan's statement at the 55th Session of the 10th
Commission on the Status of Women**

(24 February 2011)

**Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We also thank the Secretary General and Ms. Bakker for their reports this session.

Over the years the work of the CSW has led to bringing many positive developments in the promotion and protection of women's rights. It has not only served to highlight the challenges faced by women around the globe but has also provided them with a platform to get together share their experiences and best practices as well as to implement them in their respective regions and countries with a view to bringing real improvement in their lives. We are confident that this worthy Commission will continue working vigorously under the guiding principles, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

Chairperson,

Pakistan's Constitution guarantees equal rights for all its citizens without any discrimination on the basis of cast, colour, sex. It further ensures full participation of women in all spheres of life. These constitutional guarantees are not only reflective of universal values of human rights but also reflective of our firm commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women, which are inscribed by our constitution and vision of Pakistan's founding father Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

It was this realization of gender equality and empowerment for women empowerment that led Pakistan to electing the first ever woman Prime Minister in the Muslim world. This distinguished lady, the Mohanna Benazir Bhutto Shaheed not only worked closely with her male colleagues but provided a personal example of how dedicated women can help lead nations on their path to development and progress.

The democratically elected Government of Pakistan is moving forward the vision of 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.

Chairperson,

I would like to take this opportunity to share with the Commission some of the steps that Pakistan has taken to ensure gender equality and empowerment of women:

a) The National Commission on Status of Women was established in year 2000 to examine the relevance and efficacy of all laws, policies, programmes and measures. It continues to provide useful recommendations and has been the driving force behind a series of legislative reforms in the field of ensuring equality and women empowerment.

b) 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 Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on our last country report.

c) In Pakistan women have gained increased participation in all spheres of life. Unemployed Pakistani women are not only working in civil services and private sector but they have also joined and are excelling in non-traditional sectors like corporate management, IT, engineering, Police and Military services.

d) Pakistan also has the distinction of having the first woman Speaker of the National Assembly in South Asia. We also have a very adequate representation of women parliamentarians who represent 17% of Upper House and 22.5% of Lower House.

e) We have enacted laws to improve protection for the rights of women. These include the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2007, Protection against Harassment of Women Act 2010 and the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2009. These legislative measures have been undertaken with the

involvement of various stakeholders including the civil society organizations. Thanks to the vibrant women's movement in Pakistan for their support.

- f) The Government is striving to encourage more women to join the work force and 10% quota for women is mandated to be observed in public and private sector. To facilitate this conducive environment to the women, the Government has enacted legislative framework of women at workplace and appointed a woman ombudsman. A campaign for better awareness of these directives and rights has also been launched by the Government.

Among other initiatives taken for economic empowerment of women, the Benazir Income Support Programme is an innovative scheme run by the Government for the last three years. Under this scheme, government provides cash grants to female head of a poor household, which improves her decision-making role and allows her to take decisions on priority laid down by her. Another initiative is a Programme for the grant of State Land to poor women to start farms in the rural areas.

Pakistan's Gender Parity Index for adult literacy has increased in the last six years. The National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), has helped to make women functional literate, over 2 million women in rural areas, which has substantially contributed to empowerment of women in these areas. The Government has made significant strides in increasing girls' enrollment and retention rates in primary, Middle and High Schools in recent years as well as to increase the number of women teachers.

The Ministry of Women Development's "Gender Reform Agenda" is aimed at undertaking concrete and planned implementation processes, including political participation, institutional restructuring, women employment in the public sector and gender responsive policy and budgeting.

Conclusion

While there is an increased universal awareness and recognition to do more to promote gender equality and empower women as a matter of necessity and right, there continue to be contemporary and emerging challenges in this field. However, in the face of the rapid changes Pakistan is guided by the words of its former Prime Minister who during his visit to Beijing that, "We must do much more than decry the past. We must change

Pakistan stands ready and committed to do all to ensure that rights of women are promoted and protected in its territory and together with partners would work to promote these at all levels.

Chairperson,

Pakistan welcomes the creation of the new Gender Entity at the United Nations in UN Women and believes it will help achieving gender equality and women empowerment in a more coordinated and coherent fashion with our ongoing commitment and support for this Entity. We are proud to be part of its Executive Board and look forward to working with Madam Bachelet and other Member States in effective implementation of its mandate. We are pleased to note that Madam Bachelet's Vision and 100 day Action Plan corresponds to the aims and objectives of this Entity.

I thank you.