



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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

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Statement

By

Ms. Anis Haroon

Chairperson

National Commission on the Status of Women
and Head of the Pakistan Delegation

at

54th Session of the
United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

New York
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**Pakistan's statement
at the 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

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

I wish to congratulate the Chairperson and the entire bureau on assuming their office for the 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

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

We thank the Secretary General for his reports.

The Commission on the Status of Women is moving forward the Beijing torch. This year we are undertaking the fifteen-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. As we gather here to share our experiences and learn from good practices with a view to overcome the remaining obstacles and new challenges, including those related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), it is also a time for introspection and reaffirm our commitment to the areas identified in the Beijing Platform for Action to achieve a safer and brighter future for the women of the World.

Chairperson,

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

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

Noting the role of women in our nation building Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto wrote in her book "*Reconciliation Islam, Democracy, And the West*" that "When the time came to pick up my father's mantle and legacy and lead the Pakistan People's Party, I, as his eldest child present in Pakistan, led the struggle for democracy. No one among my father's followers opposed this on the ground of gender. This was the gender equality in Islam under which I was brought up."

The democratically elected Government in Pakistan is moving forward the vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto for women empowerment under a four pronged strategy, which includes:

- Reducing feminization of poverty;
- Promoting gender equality;
- Ending violence against women; and
- Introducing necessary legislative structure to empower women.

Chairperson,

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

- a) 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.
- b) 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 for women empowerment and gender equality. The process to make the Commission fully autonomous is underway.
- c) Women have gained increased role in every sphere of life in Pakistan. Women of Pakistan are now working in Civil Service, Foreign Service, Police and Military services.
- d) Pakistan has the honour of electing Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto as the first woman Prime Minister of the Muslim world. Today, 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).
- e) We have recently adopted laws to protect the rights of women, these 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. Thanks to the vibrant women's movement in Pakistan for their support.

Among other initiatives taken for economic empowerment of women, the Benazir Income Support Programme is an innovative scheme, which provides cash grants to female head of a poor household. This improves the decision making role of the female head of the family and allows her to spend that cash grant on a priority laid down by her. Another initiative is a Programme for the grant of State Land to

poor women tenant farmers in the rural areas.

Acknowledging that adult functional literacy for women particularly in rural areas contribute substantially to empowerment of women, the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) has helped gained functional literacy to over 2 million women in rural areas. Pakistan's Gender Parity Index for adult literacy has increased in the last six years.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and Medium Term Budgetary Framework have incorporated various gender-sensitive amendments.

The Ministry of Women Development's "Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP)" 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.

Chairperson,

While we review the progress made in the last fifteen-years, there are contemporary and emerging challenges. We are only starting to know the negative fall out of the multiple crises of food, fuel and finance. The Beijing Platform provides us a comprehensive document to incorporate our responses to the emerging challenges and look for new development paradigms.

Pakistan fully supports the new Gender Entity at the United Nations and believes that the Gender Entity will help to achieve gender equality and empowerment in a more co-ordinated and coherent fashion.

Chairperson,

Let us remember the words of, Goethe: "Freedom has to be re-made and re-earned in every generation." Fifteen years ago Pakistan was represented in Beijing by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, let me pay tribute to this brave icon of women's empowerment and quote from her statement "We must do much more than decry the past. We must change the future". We must all work together to change the future and earn our freedom.

Chairperson,

Women continue to bear the burden of wars and threats to security which hampers their development. They need the support of the international organizations to give a voice to their concerns about peace and security. Chairperson, unless women are given a fair representation in the peace process, the world peace will be an elusive dream. To give peace a chance, give women a chance.

I thank you.

