



PAKISTAN

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Statement

By

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on agenda item 56:

**Advancement of Women and Implementation of the
outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women
and of the twenty-third special session of the**

General Assembly

**at the Third Committee of the 63rd session
of the United Nations General Assembly**

**New York
13 October 2008**

**Statement of Pakistan on Agenda Item 56; Advancement of Women and
Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women
and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly**

October 13, 2008

**Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,**

I thank Secretary General for his comprehensive reports on advancement of women. Secretary General's current reports draw attention of the international community, national governments and the UN system to focus and implement Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to intensify their efforts for gender mainstreaming, eliminating rape and violence against women and to prevent trafficking in women.

2. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China

Mr. Chairman,

3. Dignity and the status of women as equal citizens is a moral imperative and a guiding principle of an egalitarian and a progressive society. Women continue to suffer discrimination and exclusion in all societies and in all sectors. A number of constraints such as ignorance about the potential of women populations, stereotypical mindsets as well as prejudices continue to hamper achieving goals of gender equality.

4. Women have been discriminated against in seeking access to labour and capital markets and to such government services as education. Beyond equity considerations, the abilities of this major segment of the population are being vastly underutilized. They are vital contributors to the economic survival of poor households and over all economic out put. They contribute to family build up and social norms of a progressing society. Therefore concrete action by state and society to motivate change and adopt measures to achieve desired goals of the advancement of women become essential.

5. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly remain the guiding policy frameworks for all of us in this respect. All three instruments acknowledge that eliminating gender discrimination, violence against women and equal participation

of women in the social, economic and political life of societies are prerequisites for successful and sustainable development. These are crucial milestones in our efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

6. The linkage of poverty with underdevelopment cannot be overemphasized here. It is well known that poverty breeds inequality and violence. The plight of women in rural areas, in conflict situations, in territories under foreign occupation and migrant and trafficked women as well as women affected by unilateral coercive measures are areas that need immediate attention.

Mr. Chairman,

7. Women comprise 49 per cent of Pakistan's total population. The present democratic government gives top priority to the empowerment of women and to bring a positive change in their lives. Our Constitution guarantees equal rights for all its citizens without any discrimination including in the Preamble and the Chapter on Fundamental Rights. It further ensures full participation of women in all spheres of national life.

8. The government has adopted special measure to realize these objectives including institutional, financial and legislative support. The National Plan of Action (NPA) launched in 1998 touched upon all twelve areas of concern flowing from the Beijing platform including women with disabilities. The Plan of Action establishes a set of priority action formulated to help achieve the agenda for the empowerment of women.

9. The Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP) approved by the Federal Cabinet has also been in place since 2005. GRAP undertake a coherent gender reform agenda through a phased implementation process with particular focus on gender mainstreaming. It envisages reforms in key policy areas such as political participation of women, institutional restructuring, employment of women in the public sector, budgeting and public expenditure mechanisms and gender specific capacity building interventions.

10. The National Commission on Status of Women established in 2000, with a mandate to examine the relevance and usefulness of all measures to the core issue of women development and gender equality, is performing an oversight role.

Mr. Chairperson,

11. In the most important area of violence against women the Government is endeavouring to create an environment of zero tolerance. SAARC Convention on Trafficking in Women has been ratified and Prevention of Anti Women Practices Criminal Law Bill is under review. The National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women specifically contains a section on violence against women (VAW). Some of institutional and administrative measures taken by the government in past few years are given below:

One: A Gender Crime Cell has been created by the Ministry of Interior in the National Police Bureau to monitor and address crimes against women.

Two: The network of Women Centres and Shelters for victims of violence at district levels is being expanded to include legal and social support mechanisms.

Three: Induction of Women Police Officers on the prosecution side, especially in gender based crimes, is being encouraged.

Four: Sexual harassment at work places has been made a grave misconduct and punishable offence with government and civil society collaboration.

Five: Crisis Centres for Women in Distress have been set up in major cities to provide assistance and support services to women victims during disasters and crisis situations. Side by side government efforts, standing is the private sector on forefront to fight violence against women. Incidents of violence against women are routinely highlighted and reported in the media, creating a heightened awareness of this serious problem.

Mr. Chairman,

12. Today Pakistan is proud of having a woman Speaker of the National Assembly, out of 100-member Upper House 13 are women Senators (17%), out of 338 members of Lower House, 76 are women members of National Assembly (22.5%) and Pakistan ranks 44 in the 188 member Inter-Parliamentary Union(IPU) in terms of women percentage in national parliaments (release by IPU in its World Classification on 30 September 2008). The women of Pakistan have been inspired by the leadership of late Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed. Pakistan women parliamentarians have become a collective and visible force that will continue to drive the agenda of women empowerment forward. These are women in elected

office and have a direct impact on the decision-making processes at the highest level. They are backed by a formidable presence of women in the Establishment ranging from Ambassadors (at present 10 women diplomats are serving as Pakistani Ambassadors in key world capitals, eight of these in European countries while two are posted in Mexico and Zimbabwe) to women judges, women fighter pilots, women army officers, women police officers, women peace-keepers on UN duties and women Captains of the Pakistan's national airlines.

13. The President of Pakistan, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari has placed women empowerment at the top of his agenda. The President dedicated a portion of his first address to the joint sitting of the Parliament on 20 September 2008 to the plight of women and asked the government "to do its utmost not just to provide protection to women but to empower them at every step of the long road to their just entitlements as full citizens of this state". As a first concrete step the President announced that for the first time ever all state allotments, both in income support or land, will be made in the name of women. He called it a first step on the long journey with the assurance that women of Pakistan would stand with him in this venture.

14. In conclusion we would like to emphasize that ambitious goals of gender equality, women empowerment and ending violence against women across the world can only be achieved through international cooperation and global partnership. Unless financial resources are mobilized, through both domestic and international channels, across all sectors, progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women will remain slow.

15. For the effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, 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 such areas as education, health and job creation is vital towards eliminating gender disparities and eliminating violence against women.

I thank you Mr. Chairperson.