

Pakistan's Statement on 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.

Chairperson

We are grateful to the Secretary General for his comprehensive reports on these two important agenda items. Particularly, the long awaited "In-depth study on all forms of violence against women" is a detailed commentary on various aspects of violence against women and contains many crucial and action oriented recommendations.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China

Chairperson

The "UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women" states that violence against women is a "manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women". The Secretary General's 'In-depth Study on violence against women' rightly concludes, "Violence against women persists in every country in the world as a pervasive violation of human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality". We agree with the observation of the Secretary General that as long as violence against women continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace.

The challenge, therefore, before us is how to surmount the highly complex and historically entrenched phenomena of violence against women.

Chairperson

The reports of the Secretary General have highlighted the following important areas that require immediate attention to address this challenge:

- i) Women continue to suffer discrimination and exclusion in all societies. A number of constraints such as ignorance about the potential of women populations, stereotypical mindsets as well as prejudices continue to hamper achieving gender equality.

- ii) There is a clear linkage between underdevelopment and violence against women. The goals of development and poverty reduction cannot be realized without the empowerment of women who constitute half of the mankind.
- iii) Political and economic empowerment of women are mutually reinforcing.
- iv) The plight of women in rural areas, in conflict situations, in territories under foreign occupation and migrant and trafficked women need to be addressed as a matter of top priority.
- v) Advancement of women is both a national and an international responsibility and could be achieved through collaboration and cooperation in the context of globalization and by enabling the developing countries to achieve the MDGs.

Chairperson

The In-depth Study stresses that ending impunity and ensuring accountability for violence against women are crucial actions for preventing and reducing such violence. It calls for a strong leadership at the national levels to end violence against women and to change the deeply ingrained attitudes of male dominance and patriarchy.

As a party to CEDAW and the core ILO conventions, Pakistan is committed to bring a real difference in the lives of millions of our womenfolk. Under the strong leadership of President Pervez Musharraf, the Government has taken several policy decisions to realize the social, political and economic, empowerment of women.

In follow up to Beijing Platform for Action, Pakistan formulated and launched a National Plan of Action (NPA), which provides focused attention to 12 critical areas of concern. In this regard, the government has introduced judicial and police reforms and promoted effected partnership with the civil society organizations to help raise awareness on gender issues. There have been increased opportunities for women for legal redress when they feel that their rights have been infringed.

In view of the cultural and traditional sensitivities, separate women police stations have been established as well as separate complaint cells have been set up in some of the select police stations to provide safe and confidential investigative processes to women. Socio-economic rehabilitation centers as well crises centers

have been launched in various cities to provide round the clock medical and legal aid to women and to provide them shelter under distressed situations.

Chairperson

The un-Islamic and harmful traditional practices of exchanged marriages and early marriages in Pakistan are widely reported in the media. In order to deter this abuse, the Government has outlawed exchange marriages through an amendment in the Pakistan Penal Code. The highest judiciary is also becoming increasingly involved in taking suo moto actions whenever there is delay in addressing a case of violence or discrimination against women in the regular administrative process. In a landmark decision, the Supreme Court of Pakistan banned the harmful traditional practice of early marriages, and traditions like Vani where females were forced into marriage as a compensation in the family feuds.

To eliminate the culture of impunity and to bring the domestic laws into compliance with international commitments, various legislative amendments have also been introduced in the past few years. Criminal Law (Amendment) 2004 was enacted to eradicate the negative and culturally entrenched practice of Honour Killing by making it an offence punishable with the most severe form of Capital Punishment. Pakistan has also ratified the SAARC Convention on Trafficking in Women, which prohibits trafficking in women within and across the South Asian region. In a recent development, Law Reforms Ordinance 2006 has been promulgated to give immediate relief to women prisoners by making all offenses except murder or terrorism as bailable. This law allowed more than 1300 women prisoners who were languishing in jails for various minor crimes to be released quickly. The Parliament is currently debating the Women Protection Bill 2006, which seeks to amend the discriminatory clauses under the Hudood Ordinance.

In the field of political reforms, women's political representation in the Senate, National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies as well as in the local government has been enhanced to an unprecedented level. Today women in Pakistan enjoy 33% representation in the local government and 20% in the National Assembly and the Senate. As a unique example in the region, a Women Political School has been set up in collaboration with the UNDP to improve the capacity of elected women councilors to enable them participate in the decision making process of various sectoral development activities.

Today Pakistan is proud of having three women Federal Ministers, five Ministers of State and several women parliamentary secretaries in the National Parliament who are the most vocal protagonists of the rights of women in the domestic arena. Through Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP), which is major step to promote gender mainstreaming, 10% quota for women has been fixed in

government jobs. Women are being encouraged to enter all areas of activity by proactive policies, even ones traditionally deemed to be firmly in the male domain. This year we saw women cadets graduate and join the Pakistan Air force as Pilots.

At the economic front, various Micro-credit programmes have been launched to fund income generating projects of women through the First Women Bank, Small and Medium Enterprises Bank, Khushhali Bank (Micro-finance Bank), Agriculture Development Bank and NGOs. Women Chambers of Commerce and Industry was established to provide women entrepreneurs full opportunity to explore their business skills. Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, created for poor rural and urban communities, is giving specific emphasis on women empowerment.

Chairperson

We are mindful of the fact that despite the numerous legislative, and administrative measures at the national level, we are still far away from creating a society free from discrimination and violence against women. The challenges are numerous, more so for all the developing countries labouring under the burden of underdevelopment, poverty, illiteracy and external debt. Pakistan is no exception. Whilst the government continues to expand its legislation in order to bring it in conformity with its international legal obligations to strengthen the rights of women, the move to alter attitudes, perceptions and traditional practices remains a difficult challenge. These changes will not happen overnight such as we may wish. However, the real message is that Pakistan is determined to move forward in the right direction. We maintain the clear political will and reaffirm our strong commitment to continue our endeavours to achieve gender equality and true empowerment of women in Pakistan.

I thank you Mr. Chairman

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STATEMENT

BY

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DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE**

ON AGENDA ITEM 61:

(a) ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN, AND (b) 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
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