Statement
by
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at the
68th Session of United Nations General Assembly
Third Committee
on
Agenda Item 28: Advancement of Women

New York
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Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving us the floor on this important agenda item.

We appreciate the Secretary General’s various reports under this agenda item which shed light on various aspects of women’s advancement in different parts of the world and outlines further actions required to promote this cause in accordance with internationally agreed standards.

My delegation wishes to align ourselves with the statement made by Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

There is no doubt that despite the laudable achievements of the last few decades, women around the globe particularly in rural areas continue to be marginalized in various degrees and face different forms of discrimination and exploitation which denies them their due place and role in society and the enjoyment of basic human rights. This calls for continued commitment and sustained efforts at the national and international levels.

We are pleased to note that within the UN framework, UN Women has gradually strengthened its role and activities and made significant contribution to gender equality and empowerment of women under a sound strategic Plan. As a member of the UN Women Executive Board, Pakistan is proud to have helped in the formulation of the Strategic Plan of UN Women. Let me reiterate here that Pakistan remains committed to the cause of advancement of women rights and the objectives of UN Women and we would continue our support the UN Women in its efforts for advancement and protection of women all around the world.

Mr. Chairman,

Our national vision for women empowerment is firmly grounded in our constitution. The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees full participation of women in all spheres of national life. In line with this constitutional provision, successive governments of Pakistan have taken various steps to promote the political, economic, social and cultural rights of women. Concrete steps have been taken to eliminate different forms of discrimination against women. At the time of independence, Pakistan women were mostly confined to the four walls of their homes. Today, women in Pakistani proudly participate in every field of life ranging from agriculture to industry, business to services, legislation to policy making and even taking commission in the armed forces of Pakistan. Early this year, a Pakistani girl Ayesha Farooq became the first female fighter pilot in Pakistan Air Force.

Pakistan has the honour of having the first ever woman Prime Minister and the first ever woman Speaker of the National Assembly in the entire Islamic World. We also had a woman foreign minister in the previous cabinet. Pakistani women have also contributed to the various UN system of Special Procedures.
Mr. Chairman,

Exactly one year ago, the cowardly shooting by terrorists of young Pakistan girl Malala Yousafzai became a rallying point for the entire nation to stand up for the girls’ right to education. Malala has now become a symbol of girls’ right to education and an icon of girl’s courage worldwide. Her speech here at the UN headquarters three months ago demonstrated her determination to continue her mission.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan has been pursuing women’s empowerment agenda 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 legislation to protect and empower the 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.

In the year 2000, Pakistan established a National Commission on Women with the mandate of examining government gender equality policies, making recommendations and guiding the implementation of government’s women development programs. In 2012, the Parliament of Pakistan passed the National Commission on Status of Women Bill, which granted financial and administrative autonomy to the Commission. Moreover, an Ombudsperson has been appointed for the Protection of Women against Harassment at the Workplaces.

In recent past, the government of Pakistan has taken a number of legislative and administrative measures for the protection of women which include laws against acid crimes, anti-women practices, harassment of women at the workplace and laws against domestic violence. Successive governments have undertaken various programs for the economic empowerment of women through direct financial assistance, microfinance, vocational training and employment opportunities.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite these efforts, gender equality and women mainstreaming is still a challenge particularly in the rural areas of the country due to low literacy rates and cultural barriers. Though the National Commission for Human Development has helped impart functional literacy to over 2 million women in rural areas, average female literacy rate remains around 45%, with 70% in urban but only 40% in rural areas.

The present government of Pakistan is committed to promoting literacy, especially of women, through enhanced budgetary allocations and to create job opportunities for women in all spheres of economic activities. These efforts are ably supported and complemented by an independent judiciary, a free media, a vibrant civil society and a growing private sector which help raise awareness and redress violations of women rights.
Mr. Chairman,

The Beijing Platform remains the most comprehensive global policy framework for the full realization of women's human rights. Pakistan remains committed to the objectives of Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and has taken several steps for its implementation under a national plan of action in twelve priority areas.

Mr. Chairman,

As the target date for achieving MDGs and review of Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action approaches within less than two years, we must intensify our efforts to ensure the full implementation of these international commitments. In this regard, sustained international cooperation and global partnerships are of vital importance. The international community should honour its Official Development Assistance commitments for the projects which are meant for advancement and empowerment of women such as women education, health and job creation. Pakistan also supports a continued and strong focus on gender equality consideration in post-2015 development agenda.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.