Statement

by

His Excellency Ambassador Masood Khan
Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations

at the

68th Session of United Nations General Assembly
Third Committee

on

Agenda item 69:
Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

New York
30 October 2013
Mr. Chairman,

Human rights are today the *grund norm* of the discourse and law-making at the United Nations. Much has been achieved far. There is, however, no room for complacency. Millions of people around the world still continue to endure horrors of armed conflicts and millions suffer under foreign occupation. Egregious and systematic violations of human rights are taking place every day.

Civil and political liberties rights are the foundation of human freedom and dignity. At the same time, there is a need to give equal attention to economic, social and cultural rights which, in turn, facilitate realization of civil and political rights. We must also take steps to promote the right to development and environmental rights of peoples.

We need to create and strengthen the necessary safeguards against new and contemporary manifestations of discrimination and xenophobia. Promotion of a culture of peace, dialogue and cooperation between religions and civilizations would help us achieve this objective. Together with the Philippines, Pakistan co-sponsors a resolution to promote interfaith and inter-cultural dialogue. Pakistan strongly supports the OIC resolution on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and violence on the basis of religion.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan leads this Committee’s effort on the universal realization of peoples’ right to self-determination. We are grateful to member states for adopting this resolution by consensus year after year. We especially thank our co-sponsors.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan was one of the founding members of Human Rights Council. Our membership of the Council and its predecessor Commission on Human Rights have served as a catalyst for the promotion of human rights in Pakistan.

We have hosted in Pakistan the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions, and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. We shall further this constructive engagement based on mutual respect and a cooperative approach.

Special Procedures are entrusted specific tasks to report under carefully crafted inter-governmentally agreed mandates. They must discharge their responsibilities with full independence within the given mandates with impartiality and transparency, and avoid politically-motivated country-specific measures.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan has a deep and abiding commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights at the national and international levels. Our constitution devotes a full chapter to the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms of all civilians without
discrimination. Our judiciary, civil society and media stand guard over protection of these constitutional rights.

Pakistan is a State party to seven core international human rights instruments. In June 2011, Pakistan ratified the optional protocol on sale, prostitution and pornography of children and the optional protocol to Convention on Torture. Pakistan has also withdrawn a number of its reservations to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Convention Against Torture (CAT). Remaining instruments are also under active consideration.

Earlier this year, Pakistan held free and fair elections to elect a new democratic government. We appreciate the UN technical assistance in successful holding of these elections. The new government is committed to consolidation of democratic institutions, protection of human rights, rule of law and good governance. It has launched a new framework for social change that focuses on education, health, women, youth, and minorities.

We have enacted a new law creating an independent National Commission for Human Rights in accordance with Paris Principles.

Pakistan has taken a number of legal, institutional and administrative initiatives for the advancement of women in the country. New legislation focuses on prevention of anti-women practices, acid crimes, domestic violence and sexual harassment. Political and economic empowerment of women has been among the top priorities. Seats have been reserved for women in Local Government, the National Assembly, Provincial Assemblies and in the Senate. The government has also reserved 10% quota for women in civil service across the board in the public sector.

Mr. Chairman,

The 68th UNGA has witnessed the beginning of a serious and focused debate on the legality and human rights implications of drone operations. Pakistan welcomes the reports submitted in this regard by two Special Rapporteurs a few days ago. A number of member states have already spoken on the issue. It is quite clear that, like Pakistan, most member states view the use of armed drones a clear violation of member states’ sovereignty and a serious violation of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has called for immediate cessation of the use of drones in the federally administered tribal areas of Pakistan.

Pakistan hopes that the Special Rapporteurs will further study the matter and submit stronger and clearer recommendations in their final reports to the Human Right Council. Pakistan is ready to contribute constructively to building international consensus on the legality of the use of drones.

I thank you.