Statement

by

by Mr. Naseer Ahmad Faiq
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at the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
(UN-Women) Executive Board Meeting
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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you for your election as the Chair of the UN-Women Executive Board and other members of the bureau for their well-deserved elections. I would like to thank Ms. Elzira K Sagynbaeva, the Representative of the UN-Women in Afghanistan, for her insightful presentation on the UN-Women’s program and activities in Afghanistan and commend her leadership for recently initiating the campaign in Afghanistan.

I would like to express my appreciation to UN-Women and donor partners for their efforts in supporting the government of Afghanistan’s commitment in achieving gender equality, women’s empowerment, and upholding women’s rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Appalled by the inhuman treatment that Afghan women were subjected to during the era of the Taliban, the Government of Afghanistan has begun a decade ago a process aspiring to combat injustices by empowering Afghan women and ensuring the protection of their legal status ultimately enabling them, as responsible citizens of Afghanistan, to contribute to the security, economic and social development of their country as guaranteed by the Afghan constitution as well as other international human rights conventions ratified by the Afghan government such as the very important Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

In this journey of hard efforts and despite a very challenging environment, it is undeniable that the Afghan government with the assistance of its international partners and the UN women, has made numerous achievements under its National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan adopted in 2008 that focuses on women’s empowerment in the areas of education, health, economic development and political participation.

As a result, today Afghan women have a significant participation in all spheres of our society and we are pleased to witness that women are involved at top decision-making level since they constitute 28% of Afghan Parliament and 23% of civil servants. It worth mentioning that, during the last presidential elections, 3 women candidates ran for vice-president and 38% of voters were female. In addition, hundred women were elected during the last provincial council elections across the country ensuring a local political representation of women.

On the social and economic development sector, from an outrageous total ban imposed on female education during the Taliban years, we have currently 42% female school students, 33% women teachers and 20% women university students. Furthermore, very promising is that currently 300 female entrepreneurs and 760 women led companies are contributing to the economic growth of their country and an International Center for Afghan Women’s Economic Development was established in 2013 to support this spirit.
However despite these progresses, the government of Afghanistan is cognizant that much more needs to be achieved to ensure gender equality especially in the area of the elimination of violence against women, women’s access to justice, and the protection of their rights. In pursuit of fulfilling its obligations under international human rights norms and in line with its constitution, Afghanistan has adopted the Elimination of Violence against Women Law in 2009. This law criminalizes acts of violence against women, and specifies punishment for the perpetrators. In order to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of EVAW Law, the Elimination of Violence against Women Commission was established with the aim to coordinate with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. The vibrant afghan civil society that contains dedicated and outspoken afghan women’s rights activists are playing a vital role in support of the implementation of EVAW law.

Mr. Chairman,
The presidential elections of 2014 have created a momentum for the empowerment of Afghan women. The newly elected government led by H.E President Ashraf Ghani has a strong political will to achieve reforms in the area of women’s empowerment and to ensure that the Afghan constitution which clearly states that Afghanistan’s citizens, men and women have equal rights and duties before the law and reflects the creed, ruling, traditions and culture of the great civilization of Islam, is fully implemented.

Based on his vision, I would like to quote President Ghani, “Our goal is to bring sustainable changes, not just cosmetic changes to people’s mindsets, relations and social participations.”, His excellency officially introduced the first lady of Afghanistan Rula Ghani to the Afghan nation during his inauguration ceremony, which is a historic step, following the decades of conflicts in Afghanistan that have affected women’s participation in public life. Today, the first lady of Afghanistan is a dedicated and outspoken advocate of women’s empowerment in Afghanistan.

In the celebration of the Women’s International Day on 8 March, President Ghani stressed the fulfilling of Afghan government’s commitments in bringing fundamental sustainable change in women’s role in society as well as further consolidating the gains and achievements made so far. He promised that more women would be appointed to senior positions in the government such as, Ambassadors, Deputy Ministers and Governors. Recently, four women ministers and a second female governor were appointed and a female judge was introduced as a member of the Supreme Court which is unprecedented in Afghanistan.
Mr. Chairman,

In face of key challenges such as insecurity, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, natural disasters, and mal social and traditional practices that limit our joint efforts in realization of women's rights, the National Unity Government, is committed to creating conditions wherein Afghan women, alongside men, could form a fair and prosperous society. President Ghani committed to move from speech to action with feasible plans at short, medium and long term levels taking into consideration the need for the afghan government’s budget to reflect spending on empowerment, participation and creation of safe workplace for women.

To this end, at the outset of taking office, the Government of Afghanistan during the international conference on Afghanistan in London, December 2014, has presented its national plan for reforms and renewed partnership called “realizing self-reliance”, which includes the Government’s strategy for addressing gender inequities based on three pillars:

- Continued commitment to Afghanistan’s national and international commitments to end discrimination and violence against women and to ensure the fair and legal treatment of women before the law.
- Government leadership and policy to provide women and girls with increased economic and educational opportunities
- Implementing national measures to ensure gender fair treatment and gender friendly employment policies.

To support its strategy the Government of Afghanistan is preparing a core “national economic empowerment plan for women” that will contain gender equality programs to be implemented during the upcoming transformation decade.

The government of Afghanistan is committed to implementing the Elimination of Violence against women law (EVAW) by strengthening our justice system and reinforcing and implementing legal frameworks that guarantee human, religious and constitutional rights for all Afghan citizens. The Government of Afghanistan has been adamant that the perpetrators of the inhuman murder of Farkhunda be convicted by our judicial institutions. In the future, in order to accelerate proceeding of case of violence against women, the government of Afghanistan is working in developing a comprehensive online database reporting cases in coordination with human rights and justice institutions.

Mr. Chairman,

Recognizing the central role of women in pursuit of peace and reconciliation and cognizant of the growing concerns regarding the future of afghan women’s rights in the current context of gradual insecurity and informal discussions with the Taliban to renounce violence and adhere to Afghan constitution, I take pride in informing that the day before yesterday, 30 June 2015, H.E. President Ashraf Ghani launched the National Action Plan on
The Government of Afghanistan is committed to protect the gains made during the past decade in the area of women's rights and it has been engaging women in the recent peace talks with Taliban in Oslo, Norway to ensure the implementation of the 1325 United Nations resolution on peace women and security.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to share our views regarding the UN-Women Afghanistan Development Results Narrative 2014-2017. I would like to welcome the alignment of the UN-women Development Result Narrative (DRN) with Afghanistan's National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), the National Priority Programs (NPPs) and Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). I also commend the transformation from project approach to a broader program approach with a longer-term vision focused on results rather than activities. The three thematic pillars of UN-women Afghanistan's program are highly commendable.
The Government of Afghanistan is fully in concurrence with the approaches of the UN-women and acknowledges that empowering women and overcoming the challenges they faced, require more focus on:
- Capacity building,
- Advocacy and awareness raising,
- Job creation,
- Partnership and coordination
- Continuation of international and donor support,

As we begin the transformation decade (2015-2024) the Government of Afghanistan will continue to implement measures for protecting women rights and ensuring their economic empowerment as Afghanistan needs the participation of all its citizens in achieving its vision of realizing self-reliance.
Thank you Mr. Chairman.