

**Intervention #1 by H.E. Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, at the 4th UPR of Pakistan**

**(30th January 2023, Geneva)**

**Women Rights and Empowerment**

**Mr. President,**

We acknowledge the feedback that we have received on women rights and empowerment and to this order let me share with the delegates that Pakistan is a truly proud of its longstanding tradition of women’s active participation in all walks of life.

 In fact this journey for Pakistan starts from its inception from its struggle for independence. Madar-i-Millat, the Mother of the Nation, Fatima Ali Jinnah, was among the leading stateswoman of her age who also played a vital role in our national struggle for independence.

I assume we all remember and know the struggle for democracy by Shaheed Mohtrama Benazir Bhutto, who became the first women Head of State or Head of Government of the Muslim world.

In keeping with these rich traditions, we truly have a very active Women participation also in the form of women Parliamentary Caucus. This Caucus I am proud to say in the parliament is a cross-party forum for women parliamentarians, which has contributed tremendously to advancing women rights, including through progressive legislations, at all levels national and provincial of the country.

We have already highlighted many of the key pro-women legislations we undertook in the last five years in my opening marks. Now, I would like to share the implementation and real-time impact of some of these affirmative measures in some details.

**Mr. President,**

Articles 25(3) and 26(2) of Pakistan Constitution bounds the State to take proactive measures to protect women rights and promote their active and meaningful participation in public affairs. We are pleased to have made good progress in this connection.

There are 20 percent reserved seats for women in the Parliament and provincial assemblies. The current level of women's representation in Pakistan's national and provincial legislatures is amongst the top in the region.

It is no surprise that women have played central role in much of the progressive legislation related to women that enumerated in the beginning.

Likewise, ten percent seats are reserved in Government employment for women. Today, women in Pakistan continue to serve in the highest positions in decision-making. Women are members of the Cabinet, empowered important members of the cabinet, hold portfolios of Ministries, head national pride institutions, serve as military General rank in the Army, and take part in law enforcement operations. In another welcoming development, the first female judge was appointed as a Supreme Court Judge in Pakistan in the year 2021.

**Mr. President,**

We have paid special attention to safeguarding rights of women in distress and vulnerable situations. In this connection, we instituted action in three mutually reinforcing areas, both at the Federal and Provincial levels:

First, we have established women helplines and dedicated women complaint cells in police stations. For instance, the Human Rights Ministry is operating Helpline 1099 24/7 to provide legal advice on any human rights violation. A Gender Protection Unit (GPU) has been established at the Islamabad Police Facilitation Centre to help women who are victims of violence. 98% of all Police Stations across Punjab have women friendly help desks.

Secondly, we have instituted relief funds to help women in distress. For example, the Human Rights Ministry is providing financial assistance to the deserving women from the Human Rights Relief and Revolving Fund. The Social Welfare Department of the Government of Balochistan continues to provide free legal aid and financial compensation to victims of violence and discrimination.

Last but not the least, we have established shelters and rehabilitation centres for women. These centres provide temporary accommodation, food, medical care, legal aid and psycho-social support to women in need. Such well-resourced shelters and centres are working across the length and breathe of Pakistan.

**Mr. President,**

The Government continues to take initiatives, with a view to enhancing social mobility and empowerment of women. Recently, the Government has approved a project worth of Rs. 400 Million for provision of motorbikes on subsidized rates to working-women and students initially in the ICT and then INSHALLAH across Pakistan.

We are also investing in improving reproductive health services to women and girls. The Lady Health Workers network across the country has helped us in raising awareness and door-to-door services delivery in this important area.

Once again let me thank delegations for their feedback and we will examine suggestions which have been made today and give them careful considerations as we move forward. **Thank you.**

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