



# PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement

by

H.E. Ms. Fizza Katoori Ghani

Goodwill Ambassador and Vice-Chairwoman and

Head of Delegation of Pakistan

at the

56<sup>th</sup> Session of

the Commission on the Status of Women

New York

29 February 2012



**Madam Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Pakistan congratulates the Chairperson and the members of the International Commission for Women for preparing a comprehensive organization of work for this session. The topics and issues identified for this year's session are crucial for the promotion and protection of women's rights around the world. Discussions in this session would help us better understand the challenges we face and move forward.

2. We would also like to put on record our appreciation for the UN Women. Under the able leadership of Madam Executive Director, it has been working on a sound basis.

**Madam Chairperson,**

3. Our national vision for women empowerment is guided by the words of our noble founding father, the Quaid-e-Azam, who said that a nation cannot be truly free if its women are not free. His vision could not be realized unless women and the struggles could ever succeed without women participating side by side with men.

4. The constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights for all its citizens without any discrimination on the basis of caste, colour, sex, race or religion. In order to ensure empowerment of women, the government of Pakistan has taken steps to promote women rights in, political, economic, social and cultural spheres. Concrete steps have been taken to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. Today, women in Pakistan proudly participate in every field of life; from agriculture to industry, business to armed forces and from participation in policy making.

5. Pakistan not only has the honour of being the first ever world prime minister for the Muslim world but also has the distinction of having its first ever woman, speaker of the National Assembly in the world. Women now represent 32.2 percent of the National Assembly and 7 percent of the Senate. An active Women Caucus of 90 women parliamentarians with representation of all parties has been formed at the national level.

6. Our commitment to addressing women issues is evident from a range of legislative and administrative measures in particular the recent legislations against acid crimes, anti-women practices, harassment of women at workplace, and the national ordinance on Family Violence. Recently passed National Commission on the Status of Women Bill 2012 providing for complete financial and administrative autonomy. An office of the Ombudsman for Protection of Women against Harassment at workplace was also been established.

**Madam Chairperson,**

7. In recognition of rural women's contribution, the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 2010 declared the International Women's Day as the National Rural Women's Day.

8. Economic empowerment projects are part of the government's efforts to create income-generating activities for marginalized women. The Benazir Income Support Program, the largest program of social protection providing direct financial support to the women of poor households is the network of such initiatives. It also provides the skills of employability, access to health and insurance cover, access to education and provision of non-interest based loans for women to start their own small businesses. All the poor families across the country would benefit from this programme.

9. In the last three years over twelve million women have been given computerized National Identity Cards under the BISP programme. 70% of whom are from rural areas, which help them access multiple services. Under yet another initiative, the government has distributed land to around half a million acres, 70% of which are again women.

**Madam Chairperson,**

10. Despite these efforts, gender inequality remains a big challenge to socio-economic development. Pakistan's rural women engage in agriculture, livestock management and basic chores as unpaid and unregistered workers. Female literacy rate is low, that is 45%. Urban female literacy rate is 70% and in rural areas it is 40%.

11. In the face of these challenges, Pakistan is guided by the words of its former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto who stated that "for a woman who cannot plan her life, family or a career is not a woman". We as a nation have a responsibility to ensure the full participation and empowerment of women in Pakistan by harnessing their potential to do the gigantic task of nation building.

12. With over three years left to 2030, we are also aware of the need to expedite efforts on the gender dimensions of the SDG 5 to ensure their timely implementation. In this regard, sustained international cooperation and global partnerships are of vital importance.

13. I, the Chairperson of the Executive Board of UN Women, would like to put on record that as a member of the Executive Board of UN Women, Pakistan has worked constructively towards shaping its future, which we hope we would be able to make maximum impact on the lives of women around the world. We would continue to extend our full support to help UN Women realize its aims and objectives.

**Thank you**