

Speech for the  
Minister for Human Rights on Women Empowerment

Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalam-o-Alaikum,

It is indeed a matter of great privilege for me to be here with you at this august gathering. Let me take this opportunity to appreciate organizers of the event for their hospitality. This is an excellent opportunity for sharing experiences, highlighting success stories and to strengthen partnership for women empowerment.

Ladies and Gentlemen

2. Pakistan under its obligations to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and being as an Islamic Republic is committed to safeguard the rights of Women regardless of their status, caste, colour, creed or language.

3. Pakistan has positively responded to all the regional and international commitments with full conviction, dedication and zeal. The Convention is a bill of Women's rights. This Universal treaty is based on the principle that each woman has the right to benefit from provision aimed at securing well-being and development of women into an active and responsible member of society.

Ladies and Gentlemen

4. Islam enjoins upon us the sacred task of ensuring gender parity, respect, care and protection of women. In light of Islamic teachings, we are committed to provide a cordial environment to our women where they can live with dignity.

Ladies and Gentlemen

5. Government of Pakistan is fully cognizant to safeguard the rights of women and has taken significant steps for social, political, economic and legal empowerment of Pakistani women. Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan guarantees Fundamental

Rights. Several provisions in the preamble, the chapter on fundamental rights and the chapter on Principles of Policy underline principles of equal rights and equal treatment of all citizens/persons, without any distinction on the basis of sex.

6. The National Commission on the Status of Women has been mandated to examine policies, programs and other measures taken for women's development and gender equality. The commission is also entrusted to review laws, rules and regulations affecting the status of women. The National Commission for Human Rights has been established for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen

7. Provincial CEDAW Implementation Committees have been established to ensure the implementation of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to address the issues of women.

8. The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Human Rights, in February 2016, also passed landmark legislation, the Hindu Marriage Bill, 2016, leading marriage registration of Hindu community. The Ministry of Human Rights is in process of finalization of Christian Marriage (Amendment) Bill 2017 and Divorce (Amendment) Bill, 2017.

Ladies and Gentlemen

9. Prime Minister's Business Loan Scheme provides loan to youth start new businesses. 50% of the loans is allocated for women. Under the Prime Minister's Qarz-e-Hasna Scheme poor people especially women are provide interest free loan to so as to be economically empowered. Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund has also helped millions of poor people to improve their financial status.

10. Benazir Income Support Program is being implemented all across Pakistan has so far benefited 5.71 million households. The main component under BISP program is unconditional cash transfers that provide eligible families with unconditional cash transfers.

Ladies and Gentlemen

11. The 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2013 –18) has been launched. Chapter 10 of the plan focuses on Gender and Women Empowerment. The Plan reflects on the Vision 2025 of the Government in which women are kept central to the sustainable development of the country. Amount of Rs2.7 billion has been proposed for women empowerment, and their socio-economic development during the Plan period.

12. The Ministry is finalizing a uniform Women Empowerment Package for Pakistan in line with international commitments. The package includes legal reforms, addressing issues of women particularly working women and facilitation of basic services which includes day care centre, age relaxation, offence of acid throwing, bank loans, small and medium business plans, availability of shelter in case of any mishap, educational and health facilities and political empowerment.

Ladies and Gentlemen

13. Although it is the prime responsibility of the government, however, it requires the support and cooperation of civil society, the NGOs, the Corporate Sector and international partners in addressing the issues and fulfilling our obligations to our women.

May Allah bless us in this noble cause, Ameen.