

Media Update

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UN WOMEN

PRESS RELEASE

Parliamentarians and Youth Activists together support “HeForShe” and “Say No! To Violence against Women and Girls” in Pakistan

In commemorating the start of 16 Days of Activism 2015 to end gender-based violence, under the global initiative *‘Orange the World: End Violence against Women and Girls’* led by UN Women on behalf of the UN Secretary-General’s global campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women, over 200 male parliamentarians and youth activists from Pakistan Administered Kashmir came together and made a commitment to UN Women’s “HeForShe” solidarity movement by saying no to discrimination and violence against women and girls.

The event organized by the Women Development Department of Pakistan Administered Kashmir, in collaboration with UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, was held on 25 November 2015, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, in Muzaffarabad and started the State’s 16 Days of Activism campaigning to 10 December, International Human Rights Day.

These pledges to “HeForShe” very timely follow the adoption by His Excellency the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, along with other world leaders, of a new development framework and the Sustainable Development Goals at a historic event on 27 September 2015 at the UN General Assembly. This high-level commitment provides Pakistan with a

golden opportunity to position gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment at the centre of the national and local agenda, both as an important end in itself and as an essential means to sustainable development.

Speaking at the 16 Days of Activism commemorative event, Mr. Jamshed Kazi, Country Representative for UN Women Pakistan in his welcome said: "Today is a momentous day; for the first time in Pakistan male parliamentarians (supported by their female counterparts) and male youth activists have come together to commit to UN Women's HeForShe global solidarity movement for gender equality. HeForShe engages men and boys as advocates and stakeholders, to break the silence, raise their voices and take action for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment."

H.E Ms. Farzana Yaqoob, Minister for Women's Development Department, Pakistan Administered Kashmir (PAK), shared: "Commemorating 16 Days of Activism, HeForShe and other such campaigns are there to support us and remind us of the role we have in standing up and raising awareness on the rights of women and girls. We will only achieve this goal if men and women stand side-by-side in their efforts. The youth of our country need to know that they, as our new generation, need to take forward the works that was started before us, and build upon what we are collectively doing today."

On behalf of the Inter-Provincial Ministerial Group on Women's Empowerment, Honorable Ms. Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women said: "Every year the 16 Days of Activism campaign gives us a platform from where we can share achievements and re-new commitments to end discrimination against women and girls. We need to acknowledge those persons and more so the men and boys, parliamentarians and active citizens, who support women and girls by opening doors of opportunity to them and encourage them in their accomplishments."

H.E. Mr. Chaudhry Mohammad Rasheed, Minister of Works and Housing Department, PAK stated: "When we talk of women's rights we need to broaden our vision and ensure all women benefit equally including women

from the rural areas with access to good quality education, health systems and employment opportunities. In bringing about this change, the State Government is committed to advance gender equality and stands shoulder to shoulder with our partners in this mission.”

Mr. Zeeshan Haider, Member of Youth Assembly and Representative of Youth Activists, PAK, shared: “H.E. the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Nawaz Sharif adopted the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recently. As we commemorate 16 Days and commit to HeForShe, we need to know that today we have to think, act and deliver on Pakistan’s commitment to the SDGs, especially goal 5 on women’s rights and their empowerment.”

Mr. Tahmaas Durrani from the Youth Friendly Organization, PAK shared: “The youth on the streets have started asking “what is HeForShe” meaning the awareness drive has started to make its impact in the region. The youth are determined and will make a difference in our efforts to ensure equality and empowerment for the women and girls.”

The Honorable Ms. Shaheen Dar, Deputy Speaker of the State Assembly, PAK, in her remarks said: “Along with our male parliamentarians we have undertaken a number of legislative initiatives to end violence against women and girls such as the recently drafted bill on child marriage. We [women parliamentarians] are the representatives of the women and girls of our region. We want to ensure a life free of violence for them; we will not compromise on their rights.”

Mr. Khawaja Mohammad Ehsan, Secretary for Social Welfare and Women Development Department, PAK in the vote of thanks commended the active collaboration between UN Women and the Women Development Department over the years particularly on legislative reviews and lobbying for their effective implementation.

Male parliamentarians from the State committing to “HeForShe” included: Mr. Syed Asif Shah (Additional Chief Secretary General), Mr. Shaukat Javid Mir (Special Advisor on Media to the Prime Minister of PAK), Mr. Murtaza Durrani (Special Advisor on Information to Prime Minister of PAK), H.E. Mr. Bazal Naqvi (Minister for Agriculture and Livestock), H.E. Mr. Javed Bhudanvi (Minister for Food), H.E. Mr. Salam Butt (Minister for Tourism), H.E. Mr. Afsar

Shahid (Minister for Auqaf), H.E. Mr. Faisal Rathore (Minister for Electricity) and Secretaries from the Departments of Law, Industry, Agriculture, the Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority, Planning and Development, State Disaster Management Authority, Health and Education. Additionally, over 100 male youth activists along with female parliamentarians, female activists, development partners and representatives from the media also pledged their support to take the HeForShe movement into their homes, schools, work places and circle of friends.

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PRESS RELEASE

Inter Provincial Ministerial Group (IPMG) Meeting on Women's Empowerment Muzaffarabad, Pakistan Administered Kashmir, 26 November, 2015:

The 12th session of the Inter-Provincial Ministerial Group (IPMG) on Women's Empowerment held today, 26th November, 2015, in Muzaffarabad, Pakistan Administer Kashmir. The purpose of the meeting was to agree on gender equality and women empowerment priorities at the national and provincial level and strategies for achieving key millstones.

The meeting was hosted by the H.E Ms. Farzana Yaqoob, Minister Social Welfare and Women Development Department of Pakistan Administer Kashmir, in collaboration with the National Commission on the Status of

Women and facilitated by UN Women (the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) participants included Ministers, Secretaries and/or Directors from the Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Federally Administrative Tribal Areas, Punjab, Gilgit Baltistan, Sindh, and from Pakistan Administered Kashmir. Also participating were representatives from the National and Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women and the Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights.

Members of the IPMG shared progress in the area of legislations, programs and policies for women empowerment and protection made at the national, provincial and local level over the last few months in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

In her welcome address, Ms Farzana Yaqoob, Minister, of Women Development Department, Azad Jammu & Kashmir said: "AJK Government has introduced number of initiatives to empower women that should continue in future regardless of change in the Government or personalities. We need to work for bringing a sustainable change. We need to plan properly and work timely for bringing any change in the status of women."

Mr. Khawaja Ahsan, Secretary Women Development Department said that "there is an urgent need that right person should be hired for the right job and capacity of all the staff should be built on development to work for the women's empowerment."

Mr. Jamshed Kazi, Country Representative, UN Women recognized the importance of the Forum and assured members UN Women's continued support. He said to the Forum that "we should all work for women's empowerment it is our shared responsibility and not limited to any one department or organization."

Mr. Hasan Mangi, Director General IC, Ministry of Human Rights informed the gathering that Government has established an Independent Ministry for Human Rights at the Federal level. Ministry intends to set up a Women Empowerment Wing within the Ministry.

Ms. Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson, and National Commission on the Status of Women, speaking at the event she informed the members that the commission has focused on revisiting the laws and there is a need to revise the Qisas and Diyat law. She also said other priorities of the commission are ending violence against women and girls and economic empowerment of women. She further informed that the Commission has the mandate of monitoring the implementation of women's development. She stressed the need of raising awareness and improving services is a continue process to protect and empower women.

Ms. Fauzia Viqar, Chairperson Provincial Commission on the status of Women Punjab said that it is the issue of concern that the number of women in most provinces has been reduced significantly from previous 33%. She recommended that the IPMG Forum should not only advocate for increased participation of women in the local government and should also demand that the election should be termed null and void if women turn out in any constituency remains less than 10%.

In presenting recommendations of the day's proceedings, Ms. Sangeeta Thapa, Deputy Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan, presented the recommendations which came up from the members of the IPMG. These include:

- The standardization of frameworks and coordination in developing data/information development system at the national and provincial level. However, the forum recognizes provincial specificities in nature of data as per provincial needs/context.
- The IPMG members noticed the recent reduction in Local Government seats reserved for women. There is a need to advocate for increase in the number of women's reserved seats. It was also recommended that IPMG should advocate for legislative amendment to ensure that elections be declared null and void for all polling stations with less than 10% women's votes polled.

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