

Pakistan-Candidate for the Human Rights Council (2018-20)

Contribution, Voluntary Pledges and Commitments

Pakistan is honoured to present its candidature for membership of the Human Rights Council for the term 2018-20, for which elections will take place in October 2017 during the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly in New York. Deeply committed to the cause of universal human rights, Pakistan looks forward to the continued support, confidence and trust of the international community in its endeavour to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide, including through the work of the Human Rights Council.

2. Pakistan is a founding member of the Human Rights Council and has previously served on it from 2006-11 and 2013-15. Through its presence in the Council, Pakistan would endeavor to further its contribution to the collective efforts to help consolidate the global human rights agenda, and to advance the promotion and protection of human rights at the national and international level.

3. Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 60/251, following is a brief account of Pakistan's contribution, voluntary pledges and commitments in the field of human rights:

Contribution for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Progress on Past Pledges

4. Pakistan's commitment to human rights emanates in the first place from its Constitution and duty towards its people. We are determined to ensure that every Pakistani citizen lives in equality, dignity and freedom with complete protection of fundamental human rights without any discrimination. The words of the Founding Father, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, are the guiding principle of our policy: "We are equal citizens of one State".

5. Human rights serve as the foundation for a harmonious and progressive society. Pakistan attaches high priority to advancing the mutually reinforcing objectives of development, human rights and democracy. Accordingly, there is a strong and unequivocal political commitment in this regard. We have made considerable progress in the field of human rights despite challenges ranging from terrorism to resource constraints. Pakistan remains committed to the promotion and protection of human rights through efforts at domestic level and international cooperation and engagement. In pursuance of its deep respect for human rights principles and norms and on the basis of its experience and expertise acquired from its membership of the Council, Pakistan looks forward to contributing further by engaging proactively with the Human Rights Council, its machinery, processes and initiatives, as well as with the members of the international community, the UN Agencies and members of the civil society.

National Action Plan for Human Rights

6. In fulfillment of its voluntary pledges, UPR recommendations, and unflinching resolve and commitment to further promote human rights in the country, the Government of Pakistan adopted the National Action Plan for Human Rights on 13 February 2016. The Action Plan consists of six broad areas of intervention: (i) Policy and Legal Reforms, (ii) Implementing Key Human Rights Priorities, (iii) Cross-cutting Interventions for Protection of Human Rights, (iv) International/UN Treaty Implementation, (v) Institutional Interventions, and (vi) Implementation and Monitoring Mechanism for the Action Plan. It includes a time frame for implementation of the priority areas with 16 Expected Outcomes and 60 Actions for the protection and promotion of human rights in Pakistan.

7. The Action Plan envisages activities at both the Federal and Provincial levels in collaboration with Federal Ministries and Provincial Departments. An amount of Rs. 750 million has been allocated to support implementation of the Action Plan, which includes Rs. 400 million for human rights education, sensitization, awareness raising, research and communication, Rs. 250 million for establishment of a Human Rights Institute, and a Rs. 100 million Endowment Fund for free legal assistance for poor victims of human rights violations. A National Task Force under the chairmanship of the Federal Minister for Human Rights with the representation of Federal Ministries and Provincial Law/Human Rights Departments is overseeing and monitoring implementation of the Action Plan. Committees have also been formulated at district level to monitor and promote human rights at grass roots level. In addition, Pakistan's Parliament has had the unique distinction of setting up world's first Sustainable Development Goals Implementation Unit (with Secretariat based in Parliament) having particular focus on the implementation of goals and targets relating to human rights.

Ratification and Implementation of International Conventions

8. Pakistan has ratified and continues to implement seven core international human rights treaties and two optional protocols. Pakistan ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict in November 2016. We are focused on the implementation of these instruments at all levels. To achieve this objective, the Government has established Treaty Implementation Cells at Federal and Provincial levels to oversee compliance with these international instruments. A Module for capacity building of officials of the Federal and Provincial Governments about ratified human rights conventions has been prepared and is being implemented.

9. Pakistan continues to regularly report to the relevant Treaty Bodies on the implementation of these conventions. Pakistan's Fifth Periodic Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and 21st - 23rd Periodic Report on the implementation of International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination were reviewed in May and August 2016 respectively. The Initial Report on implementation of the Convention Against Torture has been reviewed in April 2017. Initial Reports on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights would also be reviewed in 2017, along with the review of the third National Report under Universal Periodic Review.

National Human Rights Institutions

10. In accordance with the Paris Principles, Pakistan has established the National Commission for Human Rights. Functional since May 2015, the Commission has a wide-ranging mandate encompassing all aspects of human rights, including dealing with the rights of women, children and other vulnerable segments of the society and jurisdiction to take up any complaint of human rights violation. The establishment of the Commission is a significant step that will further contribute to promotion and protection of human rights in Pakistan.

11. National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) has been strengthened. The new team of NCSW is reinvigorating the Commission with a number of initiatives for the empowerment of women and protection of their rights.

12. Another landmark achievement in the field of human rights is strengthening of the National Commission on Minorities and the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances. Currently, the Parliament is considering a bill to establish an independent National Commission for Rights of Children.

13. In line with our obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the National Council for the Persons with Disabilities is being strengthened, and policy measures and laws are being introduced to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. Besides, a National Committee having representation of relevant Government Departments, UN Agencies and disabled peoples organizations has been constituted under the Chairmanship of Minister for Human Rights for implementation of the Convention and other international commitments pertaining to disability.

Legislative and Policy Measures

14. Significant legislative reforms have been undertaken in recent years. Laws introducing new legislation or addressing gaps in existing legislation have been passed by the Parliament. Most prominent in this regard are pro-women legislation including laws relating to anti-rape and anti-honour killing, forced marriages, workplace harassment, and prevention of acid crime incidents, among others.

15. A number of affirmative measures have been in place including reservation of seats for women in the National Assembly and the Senate as well as the Provincial Assemblies; establishment of Women Parliamentary Caucus; seats reserved for women at the three tiers of local bodies in line with the Beijing Platform for Action; and reservation of 10% seats for women in the Civil Services. All of these policy measures contribute to SDG-5 related to Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women.

16. In addition to a number of laws relating to rights of children, which are being considered by the Parliament, laws have been passed to prohibit violence and abuse against children and to increase the age of criminal responsibility along with review of Juvenile Justice System. A number of laws and administrative measures to safeguard rights of minorities are being considered, including Protection of Minorities Bill, Christian and Hindu Marriages Bill, establishment of special police force for security of

places of worship of minorities, and measures to prevent misuse and abuse of blasphemy laws.

17. Given the importance it attaches to the right to development, the Government has taken steps to mainstream human rights in the development sector. Integration of human rights in the Vision 2025 plan is a clear manifestation of this priority. In order to promote international cooperation for the realization of the right to development, numerous projects are being undertaken under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and other bilateral cooperation arrangements.

18. At the international level, we continue to constructively engage with the UN human rights mechanisms. Pakistan is also working closely with Special Procedures of HRC. Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers visited Pakistan from 19-29 May 2012, Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances from 10-12 September 2012, and Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism from 11-13 March 2013. The High Commissioner for Human Rights also visited Pakistan from 4-8 June 2012. These visits have been useful for us in terms of feedback and are reflective of our commitment for the promotion and protection of human rights. These visits were part of our undertaking to enhance our cooperation in the field of human rights with OHCHR. We continue to interact with human rights mechanisms in Geneva.

Voluntary Pledges and Commitments

A. At National Level

19. In order to further consolidate the progress made during recent years as well as to overcome challenges, Pakistan will take bold measures both in policy and legal reform and, where necessary, by undertaking effective enforcement of its existing legislation and policy on human rights. Overall, we will further strengthen the holistic approach on human rights with primary focus of future interventions on women, children, minorities, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable segments of society. We, therefore, pledge to make utmost efforts in this regard including by considering the following:

- i. Implement the National Action Plan for human rights, which besides setting our strategic direction and key priorities is aligning our interventions with our national and international obligations;
- ii. Formulate a mechanism to identify gaps in existing legislation, propose new legislation and review enforcement of existing legislation, in consultation with Provincial governments and other relevant stakeholders including civil society;
- iii. Further enhance the operational effectiveness of national human rights institutions in accordance with their mandates through provision of adequate human and financial resources;

- iv. Capacity building of Government officials and other relevant stakeholders, including the Treaty Implementation Cells, regarding core human rights conventions ratified by the Government;
- v. Continue to ensure speedy justice for victims of human rights violations including through strengthening of human and technical resources available to law enforcement agencies and prosecutors;
- vi. Create awareness through media campaigns, seminars and workshops, and introduction of human rights education in academic and training institutions;
- vii. Establish more crisis centers for women, strengthen and standardize existing centers/services in collaboration with civil society organizations to provide rehabilitation services for victims and survivors of violence, and strengthening of women police stations;
- viii. Safeguard rights of children by establishing National Commission for Rights of Children, and strengthening of National Council for the Persons with Disabilities;
- ix. Protect rights of minorities, and promote interfaith harmony through various policy and legislative measures;
- x. Expand the scope of toll free help lines in all Provinces to receive complaints and provide information as well as link complaints to relevant institutions including Offices of Ombudsperson;
- xi. Effective utilization of the fund for free legal aid to the victims of human rights violations; and
- xii. Mainstream human rights in development planning by incorporating cross-cutting issues of health, education, and social services under Vision 2025 at the Federal and Provincial levels. Make efforts to allocate adequate resources for promotion and protection of human rights and gender mainstreaming in the Public Sector Development Program.

B. At the International Level

20. Pakistan greatly values international cooperation for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights treaties and declarations. In this spirit, Pakistan will continue and further strengthen its contribution towards global promotion of human rights and its positive engagement with the Human Rights Council on the following lines:

- i. As one of its founding members, Pakistan will continue to strive to make the Human Rights Council a forum for genuine dialogue and cooperation on the

basis of principles of non-discrimination and impartiality as reflected in the Institution Building Package (HRC Resolution 5/1);

- ii. Pakistan actively participated in the establishment of various mechanisms of the Council and its Review in 2011. We would continue to contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of methods of work of the Council and its various mechanisms;
- iii. We would continue to play an active role in the Council with a view to strengthening the Council to promote dialogue, cooperation, capacity-building and technical assistance for the protection and promotion of human rights with due regard to historic, cultural and religious values of member states and their specific socio-economic conditions;
- iv. We would continue to promote constructive engagement, dialogue and cooperation with the concerned states in addressing 'situations of concern' in the HRC;
- v. We consider the UPR as a unique cooperative mechanism to identify human rights challenges and to make tangible recommendations in a non-politicized manner. Pakistan constructively participated in its second UPR in October 2012. We would continue to make efforts to further strengthen our own participation during the review of our third report on UPR in November 2017 as well as engage with the UPR mechanism during its third cycle by making action-oriented and useful recommendations to other member states;
- vi. Pakistan has had the honor to serve as the Coordinator of the OIC Group on Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva for the last many years. Pakistan has endeavored to build bridges and help overcome the divergences and misunderstandings that have at times appeared in the approach of the Islamic World and the West on some issues. To this end, Pakistan has been part of all major initiatives to promote intercultural dialogue and harmony among all societies and cultures and has sponsored resolutions in the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council to promote inter-religious and inter-cultural cooperation for peace. This includes Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons based on religion or belief; and UN General Assembly Resolution 'Promotion of inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace' jointly sponsored by the Philippines and Pakistan. We pledge that we will continue to work with all member states to maintain and strengthen consensus on these issues;
- vii. Pakistan has been supportive of the role and activities of the UN Alliance of Civilizations for promoting a culture of dialogue, tolerance and cooperation among the nations of the world. We will continue to support this initiative;

- viii. Both as OIC Coordinator and in its national capacity, Pakistan has maintained strong liaison and coordination with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in its endeavor to promote and advance the human rights agenda. We pledge to provide further support to the Office in carrying out its mandate;
- ix. Pakistan would continue to submit all periodic reports to treaty bodies in compliance with its treaty obligations, and constructively engage during the reviews; and
- x. We would continue to strengthen cooperation and engagement with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Special Procedures. We have also decided to extend invitations to the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, to visit Pakistan on mutually convenient dates.

21. As a democratic and progressive state, Pakistan is firmly resolved to uphold, promote and safeguard universal human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. This is manifest in the high-level political commitment, and policies and programmes of the Government on human rights, and Pakistan's longstanding and continued desire and readiness to work with the international community to strengthen multilateral cooperation and mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights. Pakistan considers the opportunity to serve in the Human Rights Council as a means to advance these objectives, and would deeply appreciate the confidence and backing of the member states.
