

**Statement by Senator Kamran Michael  
Minister for Human Rights**

**Review of Pakistan's Initial Report on Implementation of International  
Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

(12 June 2017)

*Distinguished Chairperson of the Committee,  
Country-Rapporteur and Task Force Members for Pakistan,  
Experts of the Committee,  
Ladies and gentlemen,*

I have the honour to present Pakistan's initial report on implementation of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This Report has been prepared through an inclusive, participatory and consultative process, in which federal and provincial departments as well as all stakeholders, including civil society organizations and NGOs were involved.

Let me introduce to you the members of my delegation.

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Name of Delegates</b>
1.	Barrister Zafarullah Khan Minister of State for Law & Justice
2.	Mrs. Shaista Pervaiz Malik Member National Assembly/Secretary General, Women's Parliamentary Caucus of Pakistan
3.	Ambassador Farukh Amil Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN Geneva
4.	Ms. Rabiya Javeri Agha Secretary for Human Rights
5.	Ms. Atifa Riffat Joint Secretary, Minister of Overseas Pakistanis & HRD
6.	Mr. Aamar Aftab Qureshi Deputy Permanent Representative
7.	Qazi Saleem Ahmad Khan Second Secretary/Focal Point

Pakistan is a democratic, moderate and progressive state. Today, Pakistan is confronted with numerous challenges and endowed with immense opportunities. The people of Pakistan are fully cognizant of the challenges that they face, ranging from terrorism to economy. More than ever, they are determined to overcome obstacles in the way of achieving lasting peace and prosperity. Our experience informs us that revival of economy and sustainable economic development are intrinsically linked with the prevailing security environment, both within and without. We have introduced a number of legal as well as administrative measures to counter terrorism and extremism in a comprehensive manner.

The Government presented its fifth consecutive budget last month with a total outlay of Rs 5.1 trillion, to realize the objectives of inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the country. For ensuring economic security, wide-ranging reforms have been introduced by the government to ensure sound macro-economic policies to reduce budgetary deficits, ensure balance of payment, curb inflationary pressure and reduce the country's dependence on foreign loans and assistance. The budget aims for real GDP to grow at 6%, bringing inflation below 6% with budget deficit at 4.1% and tax to GDP ratio at 13.7%. The minimum wage of labourers has been increased from Rs.14,000 to Rs.15,000 per month. Tax incentives have been announced aimed at giving facilitation to the agriculture, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and Information Technology (IT) sectors. Schemes and initiatives of the present government including the Kissan (Farmers) Package announced by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 2015; crop loan insurance scheme; livestock insurance scheme; concession of customs duty on dairy, livestock and poultry sector etc will continue in the FY 2017-18. Zarai Taraqiati Bank Limited (ZTBL) and National Bank of Pakistan will provide agri loans upto Rs. 50,000 to small farmers with holdings of 12.5 acres at a reduced rate of 9.9% per annum. The volume of agriculture credit is being enhanced to Rs 1,001 billion from the last year's target of Rs 700 billion which will be an increase of 43%. For the promotion of housing sector, a Risk Sharing Guarantee Scheme would be launched under which the Government will provide 40 percent credit guarantee cover to Banks and DFIs for home financing for up to Rs 1 million. Rs 6 billion have been allocated for this purpose in the budget.

The government under the guidance of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is firmly committed to the welfare of poor masses and had taken measures, which have resulted in decrease in number of those living below the poverty line. The poverty level had been reduced while per capita income increased due to effective economic policies of the present government. Under the special initiative in the FY 2017-18, Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) beneficiary families, who are willing to start their own businesses will be provided with training as well as a one-time cash grant of Rs 50,000 to start their own business and become productive members of society. Initially this grant is proposed to be provided to 250,000 families. Budget for Baitul Mal will also be enhanced from Rs 4 billion to Rs 6 billion during the coming financial year. In order to increase access to financial services for the vast majority of the people, Rs 8 billion fund will be created at the State Bank of Pakistan to provide loans to low-income segments through microfinance banks. A scheme for disabled persons has been launched under which the allocation of 2% quota for appointment of special persons in government jobs would be extended to public and publically listed companies. Besides, the disabled persons would also be eligible to invest in Behood Saving Certificates like pensioners and widows.

Moreover, we are working on a medium term vision 2025 roadmap to transform Pakistan's economy and address our problem of energy shortage which would lead to sustained economic revival and development.

#### **Distinguished Experts of the Committee,**

The Government of Pakistan has been making efforts through a number of legislative and administrative measures for realization of economic, social and cultural rights of the people of Pakistan. Pakistan has ratified a number of international conventions which directly or indirectly show a resonance with the provisions of ICESCR i.e. the principles of policy in Chapter 2 of the Constitution are justiciable. Articles 25-27 of the Constitution prohibit discrimination on any ground and in all aspects of life. The judicial interpretation of Article 25 has led to the development of an extensive body of case law covering a broad spectrum of governmental activity. In practice, equal protection of law is ensured by the right of individuals to challenge governmental actions in courts and the power of the courts to invalidate acts

which are determined to be unconstitutional. Article 36 of the Constitution ensures protection specifically provided for minorities.

In addition to the Constitution of Pakistan, various domestic laws, including Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and Criminal Procedure Code (CRPC) provide for interpretation and application of the Covenant.

The Provinces of Pakistan have promulgated a series of legislations which aim to safeguard the economic, social and cultural rights of the Pakistani citizens. Various policy and legal measures have been taken to strengthen the financial and administrative capacity of provincial governments particularly in the areas of social security, housing, health care and education. Besides, Treaty Implementation Cells have been established in all Provinces to oversee and coordinate effective implementation of the ratified conventions. All provinces have separate Human Rights Departments which are mandated to deal with the human rights related complaints. There are Human Rights Committees at District levels which can take up complaints and monitor human rights situation in various districts. The relevant departmental disciplinary committees have taken actions if any government official is found guilty of any unlawful action. These formal tiers of oversight play a central role in setting our strategic direction and key priorities, and align our interventions with our national and international obligations.

Pakistan launched the National Action Plan on Human Rights in February 2016 after extensive consultations with all stakeholders including the civil society. Under this Action Plan, the Government has committed to review existing legislation with a view to ensure that they are in line with our international human rights obligations and are not discriminatory in any manner.

In line with the Action Plan, the National Commission for Minorities has been strengthened. National Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been set up and National Commission for Rights of Children is being established.

A National Task Force under my Chairmanship, with representation of Federal Ministries and Provincial Law/Human Rights Departments for implementation of the Action Plan has oversight and monitoring functions.

National Accountability Bureau (NAB) is an apex anti-corruption organization that works under National Accountability Ordinance, 1999 with principal functions to investigate white-collar crimes including financial fraud, corruption, misuse of official authority by holders of public office, to prosecute the offenders and to recover the proceeds of crimes.

National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR) and National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) have been established by Acts of the Parliament and made functional. The NCHR has been given suo moto powers to take action against cases of all human rights violations in the country. The National Commission on the Status of Women has been strengthened by giving it financial autonomy and suo-moto powers of a court to take action in case of violations of the rights of women.

#### **Distinguished Experts of the Committee,**

The government has considerably enhanced proportion of the budget allocated to social protection, housing, water, sanitation, health and education at the federal and provincial level in the last 5 years. The education budget is closing in on the official defence budget with Pakistan's teaching force second in size to the military. It has more than doubled since 2010, from \$3.5bn to \$7.5bn growing by an average of 17.5 per cent every year. In addition to the 2% federal education budget, most provinces allocate over 20% of their budgets to education. The number of Out of School Children in classes 1-12 and the age bracket of 5-16 years is continuously reducing, by 3pc per annum from 25.96 million in 2012-13 to 22.64 million in 2015-16. In addition to the federal and provincial budget, a huge amount is being spent on education by various institutions and private sector.

The Government has increased public spending on education at federal and provincial level and has taken various steps at Federal and Provincial level for the improvement of net enrolment at primary and secondary level and addressing the gender disparities. Under "Every Child in School initiative", about 762,000 children had been enrolled in primary schools in 50 focus districts, a 9 per cent increase from 2014. Of these, 211,000 were girls. In 2015 about 70,400 children were reached with WASH facilities in schools, thus eliminating a major barrier to school enrolment and retention which particularly affect girls.

## **Distinguished Members of the Committee,**

Pakistan's National Health Vision 2016-25 depicts common political aspirations of the Provincial and the Federal Governments. It is in consonance with Provincial & Federal Health Policy Frameworks, post devolution health sector strategies, international health treaties, commitments and regulations to which Pakistan is a signatory. Its aim is to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) resulting in a fair, more efficient health financing that pools risk and shares healthcare costs equitably across the population.

Prime Minister's National Health Program has been launched to achieve Universal Health Coverage with focus on population below poverty line (\$ 2 per day). A total of about 100 million people would benefit from this initiative. Services have been started in 15 districts covering 3.1million families approximately.

Ministry of NHR&C has developed National Vision Action Plan with ten priority areas on important issues around Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Nutrition (RMNCAH&N) in line with global commitments for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health. All provinces, partners, line ministries, academics and international experts have contributed and endorsed it.

Pakistan's Polio Eradication Program has made tremendous progress during last 2 years mainly due to strong leadership commitment across political parties and vigilant oversight leading to quality implementation of the National Emergency Action Plan using the dynamic network of National and Provincial Emergency Operation Centres. In 2017, only 2 Polio cases have so far been reported; 1 each from Lodhran (Punjab) and Diamer (Gilgit-Baltistan) compared to 11 reported by 15<sup>th</sup> May in 2016 (indicating 82% decline).

The first draft National Food Security Policy to devise the comprehensive measures for improving food security situation of the country has been prepared. Minister of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR) in collaboration with FAO has initiated the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) to classify the districts of Pakistan on the basis of available secondary data regarding key food security indicators. This will help in planning the targeted

response for the targeted food insecure population of Pakistan. MNFSR is developing Zero Hunger Programme in collaboration with World Food Program to improve the food security situation in the targeted districts of Pakistan. In 2015, a national Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) strategy was developed and endorsed with UNICEF support.

**Distinguished Members of the Committee,**

We strongly believe that strengthening of democracy, independence of judiciary, rule of law, culture of accountability, unprecedented freedom of media, emergence of a vibrant civil society and vigilant citizenry would bring economic prosperity and social equality in Pakistan. It is a well recognized fact that democratic ethos provide the opportunity to citizens to enjoy their economic, cultural and social rights which in turn create conducive environment for economic well being and ensures sustainable development. Thus, democracy is robustly linked with economic empowerment of the people and the dynamic synergy between the two has led to sustainable economic growth in Pakistan, thereby ensuring the realization of economic, social and cultural rights of our people.

While, implementation of any Convention is an ongoing incremental process, our Government is consistently making all endeavours to enforce this important Convention. My delegation is available to respond to the queries and observations of distinguished Experts of the Committee and looks forward to a constructive and meaningful dialogue.

**I thank you.**

