

Statement by H.E Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif
Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
At the Global Leaders' Meeting on
Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
New York, 27 September 2015

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We thank you, President Xi Jinping, and UN Women for convening today's Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment.

The presence of world leaders here is a testimony to our continued and steadfast commitment to the goals and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was a watershed in the long struggle to secure for women, equal rights and status in society.

We welcome the inclusion of a standalone goal on gender equality and women empowerment in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The challenge now is to invest sufficient resources and to adopt appropriate policies to ensure its full and effective realization.

Our adherence to the ideals of empowering women and protecting their rights stems from our faith, our constitution and the vision of our founding fathers. As Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah said: "No nation can rise to the height of glory unless women are side by side with men".

Recognizing that women and girls hold the key to reaping the demographic dividend, we have introduced many initiatives over the years, including the following:

- Establishment of National and Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women. Led by women, they are independent and contributing to formulation of legislation and policies for women empowerment and gender equality.
- Strengthening and improving the implementation of the National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women.
- Enacting and implementing pro-women legislation, including the Criminal Law Amendment Act declaring honor killing a crime; Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act; Women in Distress and Detention Fund Act; and so on.

- Social protection and safety nets, insurance and microfinance schemes, and the Benazir Income Support Programme.
- The “Youth Business Loan” Programme for young entrepreneurs.
- Ensuring representation of women in political and executive institutions at the federal and provincial levels.
- Including women empowerment in the First Pillar of our flagship planning enterprise, “Vision 2025”, to build leadership among women at the grass roots level.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

All countries stand to benefit from empowerment of women. We are therefore determined to ensure a more central role for women in the political, economic and other spheres of our national life.

In Pakistan, we have more girls pursuing higher education and professional careers today than ever before. Women are joining public and private sectors in increasing numbers. At the tertiary level, girls have consistently achieved higher levels of performance as compared to boys. But a lot more needs to be done.

We are working towards creating an enabling environment that will provide our women and girls even greater access to education, economic resources, skills development and employment opportunities.

We will build and strengthen institutions that are more responsive to women’s needs, help remove remaining obstacles to their economic empowerment, and provide them a world free of violence. This requires an attitudinal shift and a long-term commitment to making women equal partners in national and global progress and prosperity.

We will provide the leadership to realize this vision on which hinges the future of our nation.

I thank you.