

Report of International Conference on

**The Role of
Women Parliamentarians in
Strengthening Democracy and
Social Justice**

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WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS (WPC) PAKISTAN: BACKGROUND

One of the significant landmark achievements by the women parliamentarians of Pakistan has been the establishment of the Parliamentary Women's Caucus (WPC) under the able leadership of former Speaker National Assembly Dr. Fehmida Mirza, who was also the first ever woman Speaker of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) region and within the democratic Muslim world. Launched in November of 2008, the Caucus continues to provide a catalytic forum to the women parliamentarians from both Houses of the Parliament to freely raise, discuss, and address issues affecting the lives of the citizenry of the country, especially the women.

The sustainability of WPC relies on the broader consensus over an agreed agenda for women's development and empowerment, thus enabling them to work beyond and above party lines. The forum has also successfully worked as an important instrument for a gender responsive House, parliamentary diplomacy, and legislation on critical issues. Since its inception, the WPC has addressed some of the most pressing issues faced by women in Pakistan through legislative measures, sensitization and

advocacy, and knowledge sharing by organizing conferences, seminars and study circles.

Building alliances, within and outside the country, for collecting critical mass and for developing joint strategic moves regarding women empowerment has been one of the most successful strategies adopted by the WPC. Civil society organizations and women activists are regularly invited by members of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus for consultations on key issues. The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) is one of the major allies of WPC.

RATIONALE

In many developing and emerging countries, factors such as the dramatic increase in the number of people working in the informal sector including women and men, the widening gap between rich and poor, weak statehood and institutions, as well as the disintegration of traditional family social structures through rapid urbanisation and demographic change have far-reaching impact on the daily lives of the peoples. Besides, the ongoing terrorism and natural calamities have exacerbated the situation making lives and earning of livelihoods even more difficult, complex and insecure. The states particularly affected by terrorism seem to find it difficult to provide social security to

their respective citizenry making lives of the vulnerable segments even more disadvantaged.

The women parliamentarians in Pakistan have, for almost a decade and half, proactively struggled hard to gender sensitize their colleagues, particularly those at the helm of affairs. To curb violence against women and gender based violence, the women parliamentarians have built alliances with the civil society and academia for better informing and effectively influencing the legislative and policy making processes. It is with the same spirit, that the notion of establishing WPC was also conceived. One of the main purposes of establishing the WPC was to make collective effort towards

*Theme for the
2017 International Women's Day is
"Be Bold for Change."*

women empowerment in all fields through legislative and policy measures.

Despite enactment of a number of women protection legislation, however, there remain many issues and challenges for their implementation. Based on a clear analysis, and in dialogue with political, civil society and experts, the WPC would like to come to an understanding about the citizens' rights as

well as the state responsibilities within the ambit of emerging socio-cultural challenges within our respective societies.

To bring into clearer focus of some of the above issues, the WPC planned an international conference of Women Parliamentarians on the *"Role of Women Parliamentarians in Strengthening Democracy and Social Justice"* on 13th - 15th March, 2017 to gather an international perspective to issues and analyse what would work effectively. The Conference dates are aligned with the International Women's Day that falls on 8th March. Theme for the 2017 International Women's Day is "Be Bold for Change," and what better way would it be to dedicate it to the women of this world and of our respective regions who remain pillar of strength for their families, communities, and nations.

The WPC invited two women parliamentarians each from the developing and under-developed countries to participate in the Conference. This provided an opportunity to revive the South Asian Association of Women Parliamentarians that was set up as a result of the First Meeting of the Women Parliamentarians during the 6th SAARC Speakers Conference held in 2012.

The need for a new social contract based on solidarity between all segments of society is

imperative for achieving sustainable development. The term social justice in this Conference therefore, looked at strengthening a genuinely inclusive people friendly political system that gives a sense of confidence to the all segments of the society in terms of not only social and economic perspectives, but also of basic human rights.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

This International Conference aimed at providing a platform for discussing how a social contract in the societies in crisis can be renewed and how the women parliamentary networks can build alliances to support the oversight, legislative and representative roles to achieve this. Essential questions under discussions were:

- What are the responsibilities which the governments have vis-a-vis their citizens?
- Which laws, policies and mechanisms exist within the regional countries that have proved to be effective for promoting social justice and empowerment of the people, especially the women including women with disabilities, rights of the transgenders and other vulnerable groups? And, how these policies are making an impact regarding specific issues like violence against women, discriminations against women with disabilities, rights of the

transgenders and other vulnerable groups?

- Which mechanisms have to be put in place to ensure that the state fulfils its role for enhancing social justice, and which actions, laws or policies need to be removed to overcome the implementation barriers and mindsets?
- How can the idea of solidarity as a necessary basis for redistribution between all segments of society be strengthened?
- Which areas of interest can be identified for joint collaboration amongst the participating countries?
- To ensure that the state has sufficient financial leverage to provide basic services in the fields of health, education, social security, infrastructure, protection and security of basic fundamental rights etc. a system of wealth redistribution has to be in place. How can this redistribution be organized? How a just and fair distribution can be guaranteed?

ORGANIZING PARTNERS

WPC organized this conference in collaboration with

- Pakistan Senate;
- National Assembly of Pakistan;
- Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS), Islamabad;
- Australian Aid;

International Conference on “ROLE OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS IN STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

DAY ONE: MONDAY MARCH 13TH, 2017

INAUGURATION



Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan Honourable Mr. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq inaugurated a Three-day International Conference on the “Role of Women Parliamentarians in Strengthening Democracy and Social Justice” on March 13, 2017 at Marriott Hotel, Islamabad Capital Territory. First daughter, Honourable Ms. Maryam Nawaz Sharif was Guest of Honour for the inaugural session accompanied by the State Minister for Information, Broadcasting and National Heritage Honourable Ms.

Marriyum Aurengzeb. Together with a large gathering of Senators, Members of National and Provincial Assemblies, academia, diplomatic community and members of civil society of Pakistan, 29 women Parliamentarians from 12 countries also attended the session. The participating countries include Australia, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Romania, Sri Lanka and Turkey.

The Secretary WPC Pakistan Ms Shaista Pervaiz Malik while addressing the occasion

“...Women have paid a heavy price for their unwavering struggle and resilience...”

- Mr. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq
Honourable Speaker National Assembly

said that *“today, we the women parliamentarians, from across political divide, have come a long way”*.



The WPC founding member, Dr. Fehmida Mirza, emphasized that *“As the first woman Speaker of National Assembly, I have seen what determined women are capable of”*. Recognizing

“...It's the women who serve as the agents of change...our Islamic history is full of exemplary women leadership...”

- Ms. Maryam Nawaz Sharif
Guest of Honour

the achievements and contributions of women in Pakistan's history

Guest of Honour Ms. Maryam Nawaz Sharif held that *“we celebrate the women heroes of our country like the first Muslim woman Prime Minister Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shabeed, Airforce Pilot Maryum Mukhtiar, youngest Noble Peace Prize winner Malala Yousufzai and Academy Award winner Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy*. Chief Guest of the occasion, Honourable Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq applauded the role of women Parliamentarians in Pakistan and around the world. The Inaugural session concluded with a group photo of delegates from all the participants countries with the Chief Guest and Guest of Honour.

PLENARY ONE

CONFRONTING TERRORISM FOR PEACEFUL DEMOCRATIC WORLD

Inclusive, accountable and strong democratic institutions are imperative for ensuring peace and stability. Political parties can play an imperative role in positioning women in peace dialogues and decision making. The discussion revolved around:

- Effective role of women parliamentarians in promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies for women's socio-economic empowerment
- Role of media in curbing terrorism and reassessing its rhetoric while covering news/stories on terrorism – a responsible way forward.
- Role of media in promoting women's engagement in peace building and democratic processes

The panellists included:

- Honourable Dr. Iqbal Abdul Hussain from Iraq.
- Honourable Senator Ms. Robina Khalid;
- Delegate from Sri Lanka
- Honourable Senator Ms. Nuzhat Sadiq

The discussion was opened by the delegate from Iraq. Honourable Dr. Iqbal Abdul Hussain is a Member of Senate's Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs since 2014.

She shared the reality of women and their participation in Iraqi society with the audience. Women face gender based violence of different kinds and forms from different sides and dimensions. At the rear of civil war and conflict situation, women and children in Iraqi society are suffering from scarcity of resources and are the first victim of human rights violations. More than decade of the conflict generated a widow crisis in Iraq. Praising the resilience and determination of Iraqi women she stated that women are playing diverse roles for the protection of rights in Iraqi society. They are mothers, daughters, wives, and sisters at home and committed fighters in battlefield. She named Ms. Asia Ramazan as a new face of Iraqi resistance against ISIS. Women are expressing their leadership skills in political process and decision making. In Iraq, transition from dictatorship to democratic system resulted into increased women participation up to 25%. Women hold different seats and have representation in various standing committees. Women are working not only for the rights of Iraqi women but also for women globally. They are determined to face all circumstances for

the enhancement of the global image of Iraqi society.

Deliberating on the negative role of media, Dr. Hussain showed great dissatisfaction over the ongoing regional media war in Middle East. She revealed with a great regret that media houses in Iraq are getting funding from the different parties of regional conflict. So, instead of portraying an improved real situation and authentic news about Iraq, the media is representing different gloomy pictures serving the vested interest of the parties they are in alliance with.

Next Speaker for the session was Honourable Senator Ms. Robina Khalid from Pakistan. Talking about the terror wave, she labelled Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) as a region most affected by the terrorism. Explaining the complexity and broad scope of the concept, she said that the word “terrorism” can’t be defined in five minutes. This word itself invoke fear and pain. A horrible picture arises in mind every time a person came across this word. However, people in Pakistan realized the actual intensity of the situation very late. It’s the assassination of Ms. Benazir Bhutto which developed the gradual realization that this War on Terror (WoT) is not an American War, it’s our war. The nature of this war is multifaceted for women because they are fighting on two

frontiers: internal at home and external. Women are more peaceful as compare to male but sadly they are excluded from the peaceful settlement of the national dilemma. She pointed out that there is a zero participation of women in peace making process. She gave following recommendations:

- Membership of sitting women parliamentarians should be compulsory in negotiations and decision making.
- As mothers, women can play their role for the promotion of peace at a very early age. Inculcation of peace at a nurturing age of child can play critical role in the reduction of aggression and violence.

The situation and role of media improved in the last ten year in Pakistan. With respect gender representation Pakistan media is very balanced. In Pakistan Information Minister is woman. There are a lot of Female anchors in media contributing in building narratives and opinion. She concluded by saying that media is very fast, responsive and only focused on discussing issues and events. However, more efforts or input is expected from media.

The thought provoking address by Honourable Senator was followed by the delegate from Sri Lanka. She started with a brief introduction of Sri Lankan political system and society. Sri Lanka has a

unicameral form of government with the population of 21 million. Like Iraq, Sri Lanka suffered from the decades of civil war resulted into widow crisis. According to recent statistics, there are 30,000. Highlighting the positive role of women in Sri Lankan system, she proudly stated that women are the part and parcel of peace negotiations. Women were included in the team of arbitrators. Whether the negotiations were successful or not the important fact is the inclusion of women in the National Reconciliation Process. Government also provided loans to women entrepreneurs to include them in economic development. They also participated in the campaign for the eradication of polio, settlement of IDP's, establishment of factories. The women in Sri Lanka also had the right to vote. Currently, women representation is 4% and in new reforms an increased up to 25% was proposed. Sri Lanka is moving towards drafting a new constitution with a new system of power sharing to achieve 30:70% gender balance maintenance.

According to her, the Local media is very balanced, critical and supportive. It created national opinion against terrorism through authentic reporting, talk shows, short films and documentaries highlighting the position of government as well as rebels. Media not only covered the involving violence and

suffering but also the final phase of rehabilitation and social transformation.

Honourable Senator Ms. Nuzhat Sadiq gave a statement that Pakistan as a state and nation denounce all forms of terrorism. Terrorist use violence and terror as a tool to achieve their geopolitical agendas which has nothing to do with any religion especially Islam. Islam promotes peace, equality and justice. Terrorism is a global issue need global solution and future plan of action for the global good of generations to come.

She demanded equal gender representation and inclusion at positions of authority. While emphasizing on the inclusion of women in peace building process she said "If you are not in menu, you are not on table." She labelled women as an agent of positive change for society in this difficult situation. She suggested that women can utilize these kind of multinational forums to initiate a wave of change.

Ms. Urdegan from Turkey expressed heartily feelings from home and speaker of Turkish Parliament. She called Pakistan an old friend and showed the commitment to never forget the support Pakistan had provided to Turkish government for all these years. Expressing her views on the current situation of women in Turkish society, she informed the worthy guests that Women got their right

of political participation in 1950s. Equal and enhanced rights to both genders were constitutional amendment. Women and their rights are the indispensable part of Turkish society. However, people in power saw reality and foresee future according to their own vested interests. That's why wrong understanding lead to poverty, lack of education and awareness in society. She insisted to take solid steps to ensure strengthening and empowerment of women.

Talking on terrorism she stated that like Pakistan, Turkey is also a victim of geography and terrorism emanating from Middle East in general and from Iran and Syria in particular in the shape of extremist military organizations. Terrorists are outside the Islam and had nothing to do with Islam. Up till now Turkey lost 40,000 loss of lives because of this menace. She holds a view that terrorism is a reality of Muslim world and pressed the need to use energy and resources collectively to cope up with it. Next Speaker for the session was Ms. Mussarat Qadeem. She works for the Status of Women in Pakistan. She said "world has been confronting terrorism from decades but it's very unfortunate that we never sit together... Thanks to ISIS that brought the issue to global limelight." While expressing her personal experience in FATA and KPK she told the audience about the political,

ensured

through

There is no distinction between "your terrorists" and "our terrorists".

In her opinion Media is said to be the fourth pillar of state after executive, legislature and judiciary. One can't deny the significance of media especially in Turkey where it was the first institution targeted during the July 15, 2016 coup. The rebels tried to capture national media to block the dissemination of real news. So, Honourable Turkish President gave speech through phone and asked people to come out. She criticized the western media regarding the coverage of ongoing war in Syria. The Turkish government welcomed 3 million homeless Syrians as guest and treated them as brother and sisters. Still there are 6 million oppressed people are strangled in Syrian civil war. Facilitating refugees are a big responsibility but media is extremely irresponsible.

psychological and economical sufferings of people. She pressed the need to be more suggestive and holds a view that solution lies with us. There has be no investment in the women empowerment structurally, institutionally, ideologically, culturally and indirectly producing conditions for terrorists instead of improving citizenship.

Keeping in view the Pakistan's strategic and geopolitical location, the issue of terrorism should not be taken for granted. Government must utilize local models and best practices to move towards inclusive society covering education, Islamic leaders, madrassas because only military option is not enough. Devise all-inclusive comprehensive plan policy based on actions. Take all stake holders in to confidence and construct Metanarratives. Pick every stance and address the issue. Address the families of extremists how to provide assistance. Need multipronged policy to erase wrong interpretation of religion.

State Minister for Interior and Narcotics Honourable Mr. Balighur Rehman was the last and keynote speaker for the plenary one. He narrated the sacrifices of Pakistani Nation in the WoT. He stated that we lost leaders, lost citizens, lost soldiers, lost economy and so many other segments. Schools, mosques and market targeted by terrorists. Everyone paid the price emotionally, physically,

emotionally. Terrorism is more prevalent in Muslim societies because of weak democratic system leading to collective loss. He concluded with following recommendations:

- Focus should be on democracy, issues can't be solved without it. Lack of democracy provides a breeding ground giving opportunities to outsiders. Terrorists act as a tool for other e.g. state, group, mafia.
- Holistic approach is a need of time. Situation improved because of unanimous national effort and world saw the drastic change in security situation of Pakistan.
- Emphasis must be on change in syllabus and text books.
- Women can produce lasting effect through right upbringing of infants at home. They should emphasize on building strong character which shall not fall for weak narratives.

THEMATIC GROUP DISCUSSIONS

GROUP 1

THEME: Role of strong democratic institutions in peace & security nexus

The Panelists included:

- Ms. Shri from Sri Lankan Parliament
- Ms. Samiya Raheel Qazi, Former Member of Pakistan Parliament;
- Delegate from Turkish Parliament, Member of Committee on Human Rights Inquiry;
- Honourable Ms. Shaista Pervaiz Malik;
- Delegate from Maldives;

- Honourable Ms. Tahira Aurangzaib, Member Parliament of Pakistan;
 - Honourable Ms. Nafeesa Hafiz, MNA
 - Delegate from Nepal, Member Economic Committee
 - Ms. Rekha, Delegate from Nepal, Member International Relations Committee;
 - Dr. Riffat Haq,
 - Ms. Chuchu Wngh
 - Honorable Senator Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq;
 - Honourable Ms. Suriya Asghar, MNA.
- Following are the outcomes of the discussions
- Empowering women is indispensable for progress and development of societies.
 - Women empowerment through education is directly linked with their Political and economic empowerment.
 - Strengthening democratic institutions at all levels of government is highly imperative for peace and security.
 - Family as the lowest tier of institutions serves as a building block of other institutions.
 - Strengthening democracy begins at home.
 - Women should be actively engaged in legislation & advocacy.
 - Women are better advocates; they have a far sight and can create ways out of dead end.
 - Peace should spread through government institutions.
 - Women percentage should be increased in all departments and glass ceilings should be abolished.

GROUP 2

THEME: Women parliamentarians' mandate to effectively promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies

The panelists included:

- Ms. Farhana Qamar, Member of National Assembly;
 - Ms. Ayesha Sayed, Member of National Assembly from KPK
 - Ms. Dukhtar Iqbal Abdul Hussain, Member of Iraqi Parliament;
 - Dr. Masooma Alishahi, Member of Parliament of Iran and Economic Committee.
- The session started off with introduction of Panelists and Mrs. Farhana Qamar presented her point of view that although women representation in parliament is increasing but

it is still very low. Pakistan has highest number of 20% women representation in South Asia and the Parliament is still working for Empowerment by passing numerous bills depict that Pakistan is maturing as a Democracy. She acknowledged the role of Women Parliamentary Caucus and all female parliamentarians for their work beyond the party lines. She believed that increase in number of women has created innumerable opportunities as well as challenges not only for women but also for institutions as it demands that women parliamentarians act as responsible and accountable representatives. However, she also highlighted the issues of women parliamentarians of reserved seats as being discriminated as compared to those elected directly. Mrs. Qamar mentioned that quota system ensures that 60 out of 342 seats of National Assembly to be reserved for women parliamentarians to fill the vacuum but this may not be sufficient for sustainable women participation and hence, Political Parties need to do more to enhance women participation and representation as the number of women candidates for directly elected seats is still fairly low. She emphasized that Media also needs to play an effective role in building favorable Public opinion.

Moving ahead, Mrs. Ayesha Sayed spoke on the topic at length. She appreciated the participation of guests in this conference.

According to her the topic of discussion is pertinent as to women have potential to strengthen the society at every level notwithstanding she is a housewife or a leader. She said that neglecting women might harm the fifty percent of our population's capabilities and if we want to establish Peaceful, Just & Inclusive societies we would have to incorporate hundred percent of our population for Nation Building. According to her observations, it is a reality that women have always been more responsible, devoted and sensitive towards tasks assigned to her. She believes that women can perform adequately if they perform their role within the socio-cultural lines of society that is how they can stay focused on their goals instead of getting caught into petty disputes. Women, as mothers, can work in creating Peaceful and Just societies by training children in best possible ways. Women Parliamentarians are working in acquiring outcomes of Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on issues related to health, youth engagement, Education and eradication of Poverty. She appreciated that Pakistani women Parliamentarians played an optimum role developing Justice and Peace. In fact, she apprised that out of top ten parliamentarians, in 342 members of National Assembly, six are women. Mrs. Ayesha suggested that in order to develop Peace and Justice, we have to strengthen Intra-party system so that women

do not have to depend on anybody and can prosper based on their performance. She referred to her party Jamaat-e- Islami wherein strong democracy prevails and anybody at any level can advance on the bases of services he/she provides. She ensured that whatever is learnt in this conference shall be implemented in respective domains to promote peaceful societies and will be sharing experiences with each other. She finally, said that only a united voice of women parliamentarians can be effective for this cause and concluded her speech by saying “Thank You” to all participants.

Subsequent to Mrs. Ayesha Sayed, delegate from Iraq Dukhtar Iqbal Abdul Hussain presented her point of view. Dukhtar Iqbal highlighted the factors affecting participation of women in Political process. There are different factors that constraint women participation and it is difficult to curtail their effect on Decision Making. Firstly, Equal rights of women as well as working women are not accepted by some sections of society. Secondly, women are also not aware of their rights of participation in Political process. Women employment in different sectors is pivotal in enabling her to participate in decision making process. Thirdly, due to conventional relationship between man and woman, it is difficult for her to educate children in an appropriate manner and thus, it

affects her participation in Political process. Fourthly, Role of Media or Electronic Media is also affecting women participation. Lastly, a number of female activists and such organization are growing within Political Parties for women empowerment especially in Arab & Third World Islamic countries. Different Women Committees are playing conspicuous roles in passing different bills and bringing about Policies in relation to male/female relationships in society. However, in developing countries women parliamentarians are not playing sufficient role.

In conclusion Dukhtar Iqbal presented her suggestion, that by the end of conference all recommendations should be compiled and shared with everyone.

Moving forward, Ms. Masooma from Iran was invited to present her point of view. She initiated her discussion with a poem of “Firdousi” (Persian poet) which means that Mankind is similar to Human body and every man forms part of that body and when one part of body hurts, the whole body feels the pain. According to her, Neo-realistic is best political system in this contemporary era. Women suffer threefold misery in some countries of Asia, South- Asia and Middle East that are; Internal War, Terrorism and External threats. She suggested that according to the phrase of Women’s International Day

“Be Bold for Change”, now we must be brave to change the situation. A women’s beauty lies in concealing herself and obeying rules. Women can work for economic betterment which is the basis of Democracy. Sharing her life experience Dr. Masooma told that she started working when she was only seventeen years old and did her PhD in spite of being married and having two children. Now she is a University Professor as well as Member of Parliament. Hence, women are capable of anything and play an effective role in Parliament but number of women in Parliament is yet not sufficient. Women can play an effective role in Production & re-production, managing quality and quantity of products. Also, women can play an indispensable role in changing financial status of a family and recently, Iranian supreme leader impressed upon having high financial status of every household. Lastly, she suggested that 13th of March, the opening day of conference, must be termed as a day for Women in Politics and Economy in honour of this conference. Moreover, we all must change our attitudes in treating our daughters, we must teach them to be independent in order to utilize their capabilities.

Delegate of Jordan appreciated the effort of organizers for taking this initiative of organizing an event for acknowledging the

role of women in society. She presented the role of Jordanian women in strengthening Democracy. Ms. Insaaf told that Jordanian women are respected for their role in establishing Democracy and they are working strenuously since the formation of Jordanian state. Although, women constitute more than half of the population but they are still struggling for their issues to be solved and recognized as public issues. Hence, a consciousness must be developed to keep women abreast with men. She appreciated the effort of Hashmet leadership and King Abdullah II for building strong democratic foundations of Jordan. It is complimentary that Jordan Government presented six proposals to the Committee of State Affairs for women rights in all spheres of life such as Education, Health, Work, Social and Economic Development. In addition to that, Jordan also presented a resolution of Women rights that was supported by most of the Arab countries in 2003. Consequently, all countries supported their cause of equal rights to women and to take necessary initiatives to ensure equal opportunities in all spheres of life. Women in Jordan are empowered and have got the right to directly elect their leaders and work in Public Committees and are enabled to deal with International affairs as well.

Mrs. Farhana Qamar opened the house for discussion.

In the open discussion, firstly, Ms. Asiya Naz Tanoli from PML-N welcomed all the International Delegates. She wished to talk about women who are in great distress such as women of Kashmir, Syria and Palestine, who are victims of Terrorism and victims of Terrorism. She drew attention to the reality that in any Conflicted Zone, it's always a woman who suffers the hardship whether she is a Mother, a Daughter or a Wife. So, we should try to understand their situation and find a solution to their problems on this Forum. A message should be delivered to women all around the World, irrespective of their Continent, through this forum and a resolution must also be presented in United Nations showing that women are strong and can raise their voices for their rights. Ms. Asiya concluded her speech by condemning Terrorism and Violence against Women in all parts of the World and demanding all resolutions to be consolidated and acted upon. Thank you.

Member of Nepal Parliament contributed to the conference by sharing her views. In her introduction she told that she joined Politics in class 8th as a student when they were fighting for democracy in Nepal. Since then, she had been actively involved in Politics, won the election and became Dy. Speaker of

Nepalese Parliament from 1999-2008. She has also held the position of Ex- Education Minister of Nepal and Treasurer of Nepalese Congress Party. While talking about topic she said to understand how Social Justice can prevail in society we must find answers to a few questions. Those are, what we should do? What is happening? What ought to be? Whatever is happening whether it is ensuring a just society or not? She suggested that if a Just society is not ensured then our role is to make Legislation, enact Laws and strong system of implementation in order to prove that our society is Just and Peaceful. When talking about Just society we should also talk about women representation and ways to increase the number of women parliamentarians. While sharing her experience as Dy. Speaker in 1999 in Nepalese Parliament, she informed the participants that they formed the Women Parliamentary Caucus then in 1999. All women parliamentarians were in that caucus, discussed their issues and raised a consolidated voice for the solution of their problems. Furthermore, a provision was added in the Constitution of 1990 that all parties must have at least 5% women candidates in direct general elections that resulted in not more than 5% women representation. However, Members of Women Parliamentary Caucus realized the trend, thus pressurized the Government for

more participation. Hence, they succeeded in their objective and women representation increased to 33% from 5% in 2008 through Constitutional amendment. She briefed that our objective is not just increase in number constitutionally but it's actual manifestation in Parliament for a society to be Just. For the cause of just & Inclusive society another provision has been made in Nepal. This provision includes, if the Mayor is a man then Deputy Mayor has to be a woman or vice versa. Delegate of Nepal said that we must all share our experiences and learnings and the slogan of March 8th is essential in making a society courageous and wise. She advised that women should not be afraid to speak the truth or speak their minds as what they think may prosper the country, make their nation strong and happy.

Delegate from Jordan demonstrated that Jordanian Government formed a Forum in 2003 aims at deep research for bringing about any legislation to stop discrimination against women. A remarkable law has been enacted in Jordanian Parliament that stresses upon an end to all types of violence against women. Besides, a shelter home has been established under the Ministry of Social Development for victims of Violence and for protection from further prospects of violence. She concluded in her last point by suggesting that women should be empowered to strengthen

democracy and build a Just society that is achievable only by educating women about her rights and incorporating them in Political process.

Participant from Sri-Lanka who is also a member of Sri-Lankan Parliament said that women representation in Sri-Lankan Parliament is not more than 3 out of 225 seats. However, a law has been passed by the local government for ensuring more than 30% representation but it is feared that how many women shall come forward. Moreover, she shared her concern that men are protesting in reaction to their awareness campaigns and efforts for incorporation of women in upcoming General Elections. At local level women run elections campaigns, they participate in every activity but at National level their role is never acknowledged and they are forgotten as soon as the elections are over. For the empowerment of women, she asked Pakistani participants about what sort of projects are being operationalized in Pakistan. Mrs. Farhana Qamar briefed the participant about Benazir Income Program, school enrollment programs for Female students, Vocational Training Programs, efforts of Maryam Nawaz Sharif to encourage women to come forward in every field of life and finally a legislation is also under consideration to increase number of seats for contesting direct elections.

Participant from Turkey Dr. Husni Erdogan said that Societies are formed by women, and women Parliamentarians are playing a key role in this regard. Women are an integral and decisive part of Society as great leaders are always raised by strong women as they are Mothers as well. She narrated a story of a girl who passed her primary school but could not continue her school, after five years of gap she continued her studies and completed three years of education in just three months. She completed her four years of High school, got admission in Medical College and now she is a Parliamentarian. Dr. Erdogan told that she was that girl. She thanked her parents for bringing her up in such incredible way that she is a successful lady today and without their efforts she wouldn't have been able to reach to this stage. As mother and as Parliamentarians it is our duty to build a strong bases for our future generation to be strong in a society. Talking about situation of women in Turkey she told that their status has changed remarkably over the period of time. Women has increased not just in numbers but also in quality. In 2009 a commission was formed for the promotion of equal opportunities for women. Later in 2010 it was decided to grant women equal rights thorough an effective Legislation. Subsequently, in 2014 an article was added to the Constitution of Turkey that ensured equality of Men and Women. Another

commission under the Ministry of Family Affairs has been working since 2011 for the dealing with issues of women. A number of resolutions have also been passed for promotion of education for Turkish girls and parents, especially to mothers, are given money for enrolling their girls in schools. Not only for girls' education Turkish women Parliamentarians are also working for kids with disabilities i.e. education.

Furthermore she told that they are working for protection of women who are victims of violence. On a lighter note, she suggested that now the World leadership should be handed over to women. Also we must draw solid conclusions for providing solution to problems of women generally and raise voice for women of Syria, Kashmir and Palestine specifically. She concluded with sending love to all women and participants.

The participant from Maldives, Ms. Ana ara, shared that she's the only elected female member of her party for the first time in her life. In Maldives there's no quota system and only five women are representing in Parliament. She told that numerous efforts have been taken to introduce uota system but always opposed by Male Parliamentarians. She believes that there's a need in Maldives for extensive awareness programs for Women as well for Political Parties to give them a

platform from where they can be elected directly.

While concluding the sessions Mrs. Farhana Qamar thanked all participants, International and Pakistani, for taking out their valuable time and sharing their views. On a positive

note she said, we need to be more, cooperative, more encouraging, and more influential. We must work beyond our party lines for the good of our people. She wished them to enjoy their stay in Pakistan and make most of the next two days of Conference.

GROUP 3

THEME: Responsibility of media in curbing terrorism and violence

Following are the outcomes of the Group Discussion

- Responsible utilization of both Electronic and Social Media play significant role in promoting peaceful societies.
- Media freedom should be ensured to guide people in the right direction.
- Media should adhere to ethical boundaries and project positive sides of the stories.
- Strict laws should be devised to prevent hate speech and make media accountable in case of any violation.
- Social media is an alternative platform for healthy as well as destructive activities.
- The younger generation is more active on social media like Facebook & Twitter. All Social Media Accounts and Pages propagating violence & terrorism should be blocked immediately. A strong check and balance should be maintained on all such peace disrupting activities.

DAY TWO: TUESDAY MARCH 14TH, 2017

PLENARY TWO

THEME: CONFRONTING BIASES FOR AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY



The second day of the international conference commenced with second plenary session on Tuesday March 14, 2017 and generated an insightful discussion on confronting biases for an inclusive society. The conference concluded with the third plenary session on “accelerating the achievement of SDGs and the Role of women parliamentarians”. Amidst a galaxy of women parliamentarians from 12 different countries, members of Parliament and civil society organizations and intellectuals attended the second day of the international conference.

The second plenary session reviewed and discussed the social inequalities and injustices within the societies - issues of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Women (VAW); effective role of women

parliamentarians in addressing the issues and gaps. It also focused on how socio-economic and cultural biases put women in a disadvantageous position and makes them most vulnerable to all forms of violence? Moreover, it focused on women with disabilities, the issues they face and challenges of their participation for sustainable development. It was a vital focus of the discussion to highlight how women parliamentarians have strengthened their legislative, oversight and representative roles for contextually addressing GBV and VAW. The Panellists for the second plenary session included:

- Dr. Parvaneh Salahshouri from Iran;
- Honourable Senator Ms. Sitara Ayaz;
- Delegate from Nepal;
- Delegate from Maldives;

- Honourable Ms. Yasmeen Rahman;
- Honourable Ms. Mara Mars from Romania;

The discussion was initiated by the Honourable delegate from Iran, Dr. **Parvaneh Salahshouri**, who talked about the establishment of social justice and democratic values in Iran along with the working of the social groups. She stressed on the fact that democracy cannot be strengthened without the participation of all social groups and especially women. She highlighted the immense power that women have due to being in large numbers across the world. The social and cultural domains require women power and participation to preserve social justice. To achieve this goal the equal distribution of rights should be provided in the fields of education, health, housing, food and job opportunities. No gender discrimination can exist with social justice as it requires equal treatment of all social groups. Expression of all viewpoints play the uplifting role in the society and ensures growth of economy of a state. The constitution of Iran also has clauses for the women rights, along with other laws such as social security law, criminal law, employment law, nationality of children law, disability law, pension law, laws to provide loans for home business etc. She also mentioned that to ensure gender justice in all organizations,

women parliamentarians share an equal responsibility with their counterparts.

Next to address the audience was the Honourable Senator Ms. Sitara Ayaz who initiated her speech with the slogan of “Be Bold for Change” and stressed that to confront the biasness, discrimination and to ensure an inclusive society women must be encouraged to get education and achieve professional degrees. She suggested that to ensure this studies in lucrative departments must be offered and role models must be made of those who pursue higher studies. Social norms such as discrimination between men and women, needs to be changed and women friendly legislation is one aspect of it. Per the stereotypes women are considered less competent and less able to achieve those milestones which men have achieved and are deemed to be more polite and docile than her male counterparts. These biased behaviours and attitudes should be changed to change the stereotyped gender roles in our societies. Pakistan is a traditionally feudalistic society and it needs to be transformed to accomplish the goal of gender equality. In Pakistan, we see that women are overlooked for leadership positions but we do see that our society is now changing for the better and social values are becoming increasingly liberal and pluralistic. Women parliamentarians as well as social activists have played a great role in the history of

politics of Pakistan. Pakistani women working for parliament have been involved in passing numerous productive, efficient and beneficial laws for other women such as laws for the women harassment at the workplace. She said we have a long way to go in having a more equal society that is less discriminated but we will soon achieve our goals for the equal rights of women in society.

The third speaker was from Maldives who started off by thanking the organizers of this conference and inviting us to discuss and highlight the issues faced by our women. She appreciated Pakistan being a modern, Muslim majority and peace-loving country and elucidated the commonalities between Pakistan and Maldives. She explained that in Maldives women in rural areas especially, are also working for their rights while taking on the environmental challenges, sexual harassment and gender based violence challenges. They are the direct focus of the women in the parliament and laws and acts related to women having equal rights are being made for them. Laws like Domestic Violence Act, Sexual Act, and Gender law are already well placed. However, the major challenge to these laws is their implementation. Unless we implement these laws, we will not be able to reduce negative impacts on women and children. Maldives

government has started a special aid of Rs. 2000 for women and girls which is commendable but they still require unlimited access to free health care. She pointed out that since there is no or very less data available, it is hard to analyze the situation but was optimistic that Maldives will be able to achieve her future goals for betterment of women.

Next speaker was the Honourable Ms. Yasmeen Rahman who expressed her happiness to see the participation of the delegates from around the world for this noble cause. She appreciated the efforts made by WPC for coming so far and achieving success in improving the condition of women rights across the country. She said democracy and peace cannot be achieved without the inclusion of all social groups in decision making. Since democracy is supposed to combat gender inequality it must be born out of an inclusive elections approach for sustainable democratic practices. She highlighted that parliamentary oversight can shape the aim and goals of a nation or a society hence protection of the right to differ is paramount. She reiterated the importance of social inclusion to establish full and active participation of all major groups in civil, social, and economical activities. In all aspects of the society such as civil, political and economic aspects, the role

played by the women is considered very important. One of the major challenges for the social scientists has been to make the social inclusion operational. She proposed



the concept of society for all regardless of their gender, age, background and ethnicity. As a legal perspective, not only due to the social norms a cross sectoral process and relevant strategies must be formulated to make social inclusion operational. Women parliamentarians should have equal rights and the right of information in politics is an essential one. Suitable institutional oversight is important topic for the business of the house and for the parliament vis a vis gender equality. Parliamentarians need to understand gender equality and social inclusion and promote the role of women parliamentarians in public policies and ensure meaningful role of women parliamentarians in the civil and political discourse. She suggested that human rights committees on all ministries of the house must be made and effective tools be

formulated to establish an equitable access to knowledge for women. Stressing on the need of effective leadership she said, “When one woman is a leader it changes her, when more women are leaders, it changes the politics”. She concluded by reiterating that parliamentarians are the agent of change, who must confront biases and work for the socio-economic development, peace and security.

Delegate from Nepal opened her speech by stressing on the fact that it is crucial for any country to make their society inclusive and free of any kind of violence. She told how after a long fight for democracy Nepal made its very own constitution in 1990 whereby a provision was that any political party running for elections must have at least 5% of women contesting. This was of paramount importance, she said, as there can be no hope for a true democratic setup without women participation in it. As half of the population is that of women the prime job for any state is to provide quality of life. Nepal formed its first women’s caucus in 1999 which was not an easy task at all. It was not only for women but also for men. However, it was disheartening to see that the political parties only ever met the 5% rule and never tried to increase women participation more than that. This put women at a disadvantageous

position and compelled them to take it to the streets when the interim constitution committee did not have any women representation in it. With a united voice and a stronger will Nepal was able to put two women in the interim constitution committee and it resulted in 33% of women participation in 2008. In nine years, Nepal made a huge leap from a mere 5% of women

“...Equality is Quality.”

- Delegate from Nepal

in the parliament to a whopping 33%. Nepal also amended the laws that were discriminatory and made efforts to ensure an inclusive democracy. Now women are enjoying the same privilege as men. If an industry is set up in the name of a woman a loan of Rs. 500,000 is given without collateral. Similarly, if land is bought in a woman's name, a cut of 25% is given in taxes. These measures ensure respect for women and help them fight poverty. It highlights how legislation must be used to empower women. To help women at the grass root level special support is given in form of funds and loans for businesses. She concluded by emphasizing on the importance of scholarships for girls in schools.



The Chief Guest of the second plenary session was Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Law and Justice Barrister Zafarullah Khan. He shared his insights on confronting biases for an inclusive society in Pakistan. He highlighted that Pakistan is committed to end all forms of gender discrimination and to change the stereotype mind-sets that hampers women's proactive participation in decision making processes. Barrister Zafarullah Khan lauded the contributions of women parliamentarians in advancing gender-sensitive legislation in Pakistan. He offered that to root out this menace of gender discrimination from our society we must change the patriarchal mind-set that has been ingrained with anti-women sentiments. He talked about the power relationship in historical and philosophical background and talked about how societies have evolved. He praised how women have been conceiving and fighting for their rights and their struggle has borne fruit in the last two or three decades. He mentioned that

1973 constitution of Pakistan specifically states that there can be no discrimination on the basis of gender. Furthermore, the International Covenant of Women Rights 1966 and our 1973 constitution are in sync with each other giving Pakistan full legitimacy in fighting gender based biases. However, it is not the laws that will bring change in our society, it is the social values and social relations. Hence change must come from the grass root level. He appreciated that a lot of important Pakistani legislations have been piloted by, championed by and motivated by our women parliamentarians. He then mentioned about important laws which now exist in Pakistan including that regarding the menace of honour killing. He acknowledged that we have achieved a legal regime. Pakistani law has two sets of laws:

- Common law
- Muslim jurisprudence.

He stated that “we have changed the procedure of all laws to make it work.” There are four people who worked for these laws are Begum Shasta Pervez Malik, Ms. Sughra, Zaid Hamid and Zafarullah. There have been further laws for the rape victim such as protection of the identity of the women, various new criminal punishments, DNA test been made mandatory that are all pro-women and anti-violence. One of the most

progressive and developed law all over the world has been the law for the harassment of the women at work has helped our women to work more bravely and boldly. Other efforts are being made for independent institutions; work for the rights of children and regarding inheritance. The laws regarding acid attacks are also modified. Pakistan is at the process of introducing more laws as well as revising existing laws. For example, he mentioned the electoral reforms that are under consideration includes that if a 10% of women are not registered in a constituency then there will be no election i.e. null and void. Pakistan have signed and ratified almost all the conventions regarding women and child abduction has been ratified in the Hague convention. He concluded by appreciating that Pakistan is the second Muslim country to work for women at this level.



Delegate from Romania, Honourable Ms. Mara Mars outlined that the test of democracy in any country is the level of respect for women and protection of their

inherent rights. She remarked that women's active participation in labor market is highly imperative for building inclusive societies. She narrated from the fall of communism that after that in Romania legal framework has been established for the equality between men and women, improving laws, ratifying laws for equal opportunities and treatment for women. She stressed that in European Union, of which Romania is a member, all actions must be taken on equality. The agenda planned by the Romanian government regarding the priorities from 2016-2019 includes increased participation of women in the society, equal pay for equal work and equal opportunities for women in politics, gender based violence laws, promoting non-discrimination and sexual harassment.

Secretary WPC Pakistan MNA Ms. Shaista Pervaiz Malik highlighted that violence against women is a global issue requiring collective actions. She emphasized not only the implementation of laws in letter and spirit but also underlined the need to build synergies to confront and change the mind-sets that hinders women socio-economic advancement. She stated that deliberations must be thought provoking and as Pakistan is a heavily legislated country we must work now for the implementation. Her concern was that whether these laws were effective or not or if there was a need to revisit them. She stated that the problem existed in the mind sets of the people and these mind sets don't change easily and that is why we need to work together to change the stereotype.

THEMATIC GROUP DISCUSSIONS

On second day, three thematic sessions generated considerable number policy options pertaining to women empowerment, preventing gender based violence and integrating transgender in development agendas. Every discussion was chaired by

one Pakistani and one international Member of Parliament from participant countries. The panellists from different countries shared their experiences and best practices in their respective countries.

GROUP 1

Bringing Upon Change: Women Parliamentarians Influencing and Reinforcing the Political Agenda to Advance Women Empowerment Initiatives



The thematic session “women parliamentarians influencing & reinforcing the political agenda to advance women empowerment initiatives” reviewed and discussed policy options to facilitate women parliamentarians to advance the cause of women advancement. The importance of women in parliament is increasing. With time, it has become crucial for women to speak for themselves and for their rights.

The panellists included:

- Honourable Ms. Asiya Nasir, Member Balochistan Assembly;
- Ms. Asma Rasheed
- Ms. Ayesha Syed, Member National Assembly;

■ Delegate from Nepal

Ms. Asiya Nasir started the session by appreciating the participation of international delegates from Nepal, Maldives, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan. She stated that the institution of parliament and the role women can play in it, is one of the major components of the political system of a society. Although, there are almost 60 seats reserved for the women but women parliamentarians do more than 60% of the house agenda. WPC was made for the women empowerment had initiated various legislation among which 27 legislations have been passed. Area of implementation has been a little bit slow as compared to the legislative purpose. This

conference is also part of this collective effort.

Ms. Asma Rasheed shared her experiences in the parliament. She said that women face difficulties but fortunately we have been able to overcome those difficulties. We also could have been at the position of less privileged ones but we should also work from them. Ms. Anara from Maldives also added points to this topic by saying that only few members



in Maldives Parliament are women. Efforts are being made for increasing the quota for

women representation in the parliament.

Only 5 women members are present in the parliament currently out of 85 members. In Maldives society women are considered only responsible for the household and women in



politics are not respected or appreciated. Therefore, there is a dire need to change the mind sets of the people to bring transition in the society. But we as women are struggling hard for better status of women in the society and to get equal opportunities and rights.

Ms. Ayesha Syed stated that ignorance leads to instability and unrest in the society. Equal rights for everyone and no discrimination is essential. Women can better understand the problem of the other women as compared to men, as they are the sufferers. It is important for the political system to give equal opportunities and representation to the women in the mainstream politics. Merit should be kept under consideration. While allocating seats the intra party transparency is also mandatory. The issue of reserved seats and general seats for women should be resolved. The problems faced by the women should be solved and for this unity among women is required. A parliamentarian has the right to make laws and do legislative work and get those laws implemented and women parliamentarians play an important role in it. These parliamentarians are working not only for the issues of the women but they are also playing significant role. She mentioned about her ranking as 5th out of all the parliamentarians according to the merit and she has passed 14 bills while her 15th bill will be presented in the assembly soon. Ms. Khatri from Nepal thanked the WPC for providing her a chance to speak on this effective topic of discussion. She firstly presented her view of empowering the parliamentarians. So they can play their best role. We all have the problem of having heavy and detailed legislation with lack of



implementation. She mentioned that they have endorsed their constitution presented by their respective constituent assembly. The milestone achieved by the Nepal government is the issuance of citizenship on the name of mother only. Propositional inclusiveness is one of the major achievements. Out of the President, Vice President, Speaker and deputy speaker, one women representative is mandatory. She has been very pleased to inform the participants that in governmental system of Nepal currently a woman is at the post of the speaker and also one of the judges of the Supreme Court is a woman.

Ms. Atiyya Inayatullah further added her comments. She mentioned about her work in progress on the resolution and declaration to



be signed. In the closing ceremony, the draft will be presented to the delegates for

signature. She mentioned that there is a need for the change to bring the women to a better position in the society and for that participation from opposite gender is also required. WPC has also got gentlemen friends who are playing their role in empowering women caucus. The empowerment of women is a work for the humanity. Hindrances that women face due to social, cultural, political and economic aspects should be eliminated. The political system and political parties should have their merit based selections for both men and women. Hard work is recognized with continuous efforts else you get brushed away with time. The women parliamentarians are struggling hard to get open constituency seats and that will be a great achievement. The motto of this conference is networking and taking the women agenda together both

nationally and internationally, so we should be bold for change now. The whole panel agreed that women are fully capable and can do anything if they have support and are provided with the right opportunities. Women can do more than men. The participants of this conference are from various states and are rightly representing their respective states and societies. Equal rights for all will lead towards the more stable society. WPC is a success story at national and international level. Despite of political difference all women join hands together, treat and bring solutions to the problems faced by the women. One of the products of this joint effort is the bill regarding the harassment of women at workplace. It is time to promote women emancipation for economic and social development

GROUP 2



THEME: Cohesive Strategies to curb various forms of violence; domestic violence, child labor, forced and child marriages, harassment at work place, physical, sexual and emotional abuse

Violence against women is a global challenge and cannot be confined to any particular region. To iron out policies to curb all forms of violence is the need of the hour. The panel for the said discussion consists of members of national parliament, international parliamentarians, members from the civil society and other stakeholders. The panel included:

- Mr. Shafqat Mahmood, Member National Assembly of Pakistan;
- Former Speaker National Assembly Honourable Dr. Fahmida Mirza;
- Honourable Senator Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq;
- Delegate from Sri Lanka;

- Delegate from Turkey;
- Delegate from Nepal;
- Delegate from Myanmar.

The delegate from Turkey initiated the discussion by highlighting the importance of sensitization of public through such conferences is highly essential for preventing violence against women. She especially stressed upon raising awareness vis a vis emotional abuse and harassment at workplace. She stressed that it is the parliamentarians' responsibility to create an appropriate working environment where women are comfortable. She then talked about child marriages and how they are detrimental to the society. She reiterated that

it is vital that we spread awareness regarding this issue by sensitizing our society through media and conferences like the one that she was attending. She stressed that a profile of existing legislation should be undertaken and grey areas requiring further legislation need to be identified. She wanted the panel to focus on the lacunae that existed in the present laws and that must be fixed. She raised a very important point that forms of domestic violence that don't have any legislation must be legislated e.g. marital rape. A legal framework is the starting point of weeding out any menace from the society. Implementation is the key and it's at the government level that changes must be brought about to get a trickle-down effect. Collective action must be taken to empower women financially and ensure that they can stand on their own two feet.



The delegate from Sri Lanka had the floor next and she iterated that Gender Based Violence is not confined to a region but is a global phenomenon. She talked about murder, rape, slavery, trafficking, exploitation and other harsh discriminatory situations that women are put through. She said it was entrenched at all levels. However, talking about Sri Lanka she expressed with pride that the situation is satisfactory. She told the panellists about the Penal Court Amendments and about the National Action Plan incorporating strategies to counter Gender Based Violence including dowry related violence, disappearances, violence of domestic maids and forced pregnancies. She highlighted the importance of a separate ministry to deal with Gender Based Issues and one that can negotiate with relevant persons. She told how in Sri Lanka there is a separate desk for women in police stations and a separate day established in courts.

Delegate from Myanmar talked about the



lack of awareness and inability of the education system in instilling this awareness.

She talked about child labor and said that every country must invest in education of all individuals. She said Gender Based Violence is dangerous for all countries.

Delegate from Nepal talked about a National Information Commission that disseminates all information about all new and existing laws to the public. She displayed a book which had all the legislation and policy of Nepal and talked about how it has ensured to make everyone at all levels aware of their rights. She further praised her country by stating that there can be no amendment to the constitution unless a woman member is present in its committee. She emphasized that women need to spread the information about their constitutional rights. She stated that CEDAW made a list of all the laws that were discriminatory and make amendments to them. She then listed down some of their women-friendly laws: Inheritance Right Bill, Equal rights to sons and daughters, Gender responsive budget system. She too talked about making women financially empowered and working from the highest level. Making the top inclusive was her motto.

Next delegate was from Turkey who talked about laws on fighting violence. She appreciated Programmes like those that give out family planning advice and trainings to housewives. She stressed that reactions must be made to what has happened to women in

the past in all sphere of life. She emphasized that every country must pay heed to women issues.

Another worthy contribution was made to the discussion by Ms. Yasmeen Rehman who talked about first and foremost criminalizing domestic violence. She also talked about economic empowerment as without this no further step towards women emancipation can be taken. She also talked about reforming the irrelevant education system that does not guarantee jobs to those even who are qualified. She wanted an applicable education system for all especially women to increase their participation in the labour force. She emphasized on the lacuna that exists when there is a disconnect between the public and the parliament. She said it is imperative that an inclusive and interactive parliament be there to address the issues of the common man. She also suggested that shelter homes for those who want to escape an abusive setup must be made by the government and full protection must be provided there. Her focus also was on accountability mechanisms that must be made transparent and effective in order to increase the currently abysmal conviction rate. She also gave the suggestion of making helplines that can guide our women better.

The discussion was then held among the other members of the thematic session

whereby some very important suggestions were made.

- The capacity building of police and administration relevant to implementation of pro-women laws should be undertaken. People should be educated about legislative processes and laws for effective implementation.
- A separate desk for women should be established in courts and police stations respectively.
- Women should be provided with a conducive work environment free from all kinds of harassment and discrimination.
- The UN Women Charter should be used as a guide to ensure effective implementation of the policies.
- Media should play a vibrant role in preventing violence against women.
- Education of women is indispensable for their economic empowerment and hence be invested in heavily.

GROUP 3

THEME: Gender Based Violence & Challenges of Integrating Transgender in Development Agenda



An insightful debate on the critical issue of “Gender Based Violence and Challenges of

Integrating Transgender in Development Agenda” took place on the sidelines of the

plenary sessions on second day of the conference. The panellists included:

- Dr. Ayesha Isani;
- MNA Shaza Fatima Khwaja;
- MPA Amna Sardar;
- Delegate from Romanian Parliament.

Dr. Ayesha Isani initiated the debate by stating that the gender base violence is the social and cultural reality and not just the topic of conversation in drawing rooms or conferences. She holds a view that victims of gender base violence are unable to articulate their issue to their husbands, sons, fathers, etc which is big problem of our society. She emphasized on the mobilization in this regard and should not be restricted to just discussion here. She identified the problem of unapproachability of victims. They are not capable of requesting help because they are suffering financially, psychologically and physically especially women. Another problem is the harassment at home, public and workplace which to some extent experienced by all women whether educated or uneducated. So, she presented the idea of approaching these women by the mobilizers themselves and gain their confidence for resolution of the issues. She recommended

that all institutions should have places like centres, rooms, dedicated workforce which encourage them to come over.

Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly Ms. Amna Sardar highlighted that transgenders are the most vulnerable strata of the society facing harassment and bullying daily. They are victimized as untouchables. She informed the audience about her work in this regard. She presented a resolution in her respective provincial assembly about protecting and providing the fundamental rights to transgender community.

She holds a view that being a transgender is not a matter of choice, it's a natural phenomenon but instead of acknowledging this fact the society treats them in an inhumane manner. It's the social setup which forced them to live with "Guru" and adopt inappropriate professions like prostitution, begging, etc. It's the society which denied them the right of education, job and health facilities which is a clear violation of Article 25 of 1973 Constitution of Pakistan. They don't have separate educational institutes, hospitals even wards. She substantiated her stance by giving the example of a transgender who expired in Peshawar few months back because hospital authorities did not decided in which ward she should be admitted for first aid. She also revealed that 26 members of transgender community were killed in



province of KPK only. They are the victims of physical abuse and sexually transmitted diseases like HIV as highlighted in various videos on social media in Pakistan. However, there also some good examples in this regard. She narrated the story of two educated transgenders having full support of their families. She recommended that the emphasis should be on their educating, training. They should be encouraged and involved in political process. Government of Pakistan should reserve seats for them in Federal and Provincial Assemblies.

Member of Parliament from Romania termed it as a global issue not the subcontinental issue only. As a Secretary Committee on equal opportunities for



women and men in her country, she stressed to adopt an inclusive approach in a democratic system towards the issue of transgenders as it's the issue of nature not nurture. She encourage the women to work as the mobilizers because of high level of empathy and sensitivity as compare to men. She concluded by recommending audience to

educate the children, society and political community to be more tolerant and permissive towards them.



MNA Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja started by highlighting the major issue of confusion in society regarding what is gender based violence and who are actually transgenders? She defined gender based violence as any kind of violence that perpetuated just because a person belongs to a certain gender. Highlighting the complexity of issue she informed the audience about the diversity within mix gender community e.g. transgenders, transsexuals, Unix, zero gender people, born male but feel like women or vice versa. So, it's the whole spectrum of individual to be looked at which makes the matters in hand more complicated. As a member of YPF which is working on the issue from last five years in consultation with civil society, NGOs and transgender community, she is working to involve the state machinery e.g. parliament, police, human rights commission. She also informed that she had a very candid discussion all

above mentioned institution regarding the role of parliament in this particular matter. She said that in Pakistan this issue is socially, culturally and religiously bounded issue. Here main question is: How to define and differentiate between the physically and emotionally transgenders? The answer to this question will bring the matter from the domain of nature to nurture. All state institution in Pakistan across the board including supreme judiciary accept the fact that the whole community of transgenders is at high risk of discrimination, harassment, violence, denial of basic right to live. However, it's a matter of pride that Supreme judiciary in Pakistan accepted their right of legal identity and ordered NADRA to issue them a national identity cards after medical check-up which technically gave them the voting rights. However, government is facing various problems in the implementation e.g. separate polling booths, revising voter lists, etc. Recommendations in this respect were

send to electoral reforms committee. In the 2017 census, there is a separate provision for transgenders. After the census government will have the data of the total number of transgenders in particular constituency. Afterwards government will ensure the separate polling booths for them.

She also shared her experience with transgender community and enlightened the audience that transgender community does not want separate institutions because after establishment these places will become taboo places. It requires a gradual change of mindsets that this community should be allowed to be integrated in the mainstream without harassment. She also shared the good news that Transgender Person Protection of Rights Bill, 2017 has been introduced in Pakistan Senate. However, the law will be of no utility without social acceptance.

PLENARY THREE

THEME: CONFRONTING IGNORANCE FOR A HEALTHY AND EDUCATED CITIZENRY

“Accelerating the Achievement of SDGs and the Role of Women Parliamentarians”



The third plenary session on second day of the international conference reviewed the promotion of a gender-responsive and rights-based approach to implementing, monitoring and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for women's social, economic and cultural empowerment. It deliberated on the foundations for approaches as already have been laid down in international human rights conventions for addressing issues of violence against women that thrive in the absence of women's rights.

The discussion revolved around:

- Mainstreaming SDGs for implementation by the State and the stakeholders and aligning SDGs with relevant international human rights instruments [CEDAW, CRC, UNCPRD and ICCPR vis a vis the SDGs (Goals 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, & 16)];
- Gender in climate change and disaster risk reduction; Role of women Parliamentarians in developing gender responsive strategies;
- Women and Climate Change achieving SDGs 6, 13 & 7;
- Role of women parliamentarians in integrating women in environmental planning and policy making processes
- Gender in climate change and disaster risk reduction: Role of women Parliamentarians in developing gender responsive strategies;

- Women and Climate Change achieving SDGs 6, 13 & 7.

The Panellists for the third plenary session included:

- Pakistan's Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Honourable Ms. Marriyum Aurangzeb (Session Chair)
- Honourable Senator Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq
- Dr. Sudarshini Fernandopulle (Sri Lanka);
- Dr. Mehreen Farooqi (Australia);
- Honourable MNA Shehryar Khan Afridi;
- Ms. Ammy Amalia Fatma Surya – Indonesia

The session started with welcome remarks by Honourable Ms. Marriyum Aurangzeb. She enlightened the audience about the journey of Pakistan towards achieving the SDGs, started off in 2013. She informed the worthy guests that Parliamentary Task Force (PTF)

has been established in all the provinces of Pakistan with the objective of strengthening the legislation, oversight, and representation to not only address the challenges but to also play a pro-active role for accelerating the pace in achieving the agreed and committed targets. It will allow the inclusion of Human Development Index (HDI) framework in parliamentary debates. In addition to the development of PTF, Pakistan also aligned the goals and targets of its Vision 2025 and entire Disbursement Funds of Prime Minister with SDGs. She highlighted that Parliament of Pakistan is internationally first to have SDGs Secretariat. Besides, Pakistan's Parliament is also the first to have Planning and Development Unit for SDGs which coordinate at local, district and provincial levels to make policy and interventions at both Provincial and National level. She mentioned that the Standing Committees were also engaged relative to each goal of MDGs and afterward SDGs.

Honourable Minister urged the media to play its imperative role in educating people about SDG's. She also put in the picture the contribution of Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) which has made it compulsory for electronic media to dedicate 10% of the airtime on public messages for generating awareness related to SDGs, Vision 2025 and prioritizing weekly programmes on human development. Finally, Honourable Minister announced that from March 15th, 2017 population census will commence after 19 years in Pakistan and requested all citizens to cooperate with government in this initiative and provide accurate and authentic information. She entitled the contribution for the timely completion of census as a “national responsibility.”

The Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication Honourable Senator Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq was the second speaker for plenary three. She presented a comprehensive picture of polio cases in Pakistan. Few years back, thousands of polio cases were reported in Pakistan but the lowest number of cases in the history were reported in 2016. She termed it as a big achievement for government of Pakistan. Furthermore, she recognized that Pakistan lies in a geographical region where unexpected weather patterns such as



flooding, cyclones and temperature fluctuations are exceptionally predominant leading to poor health status, water borne diseases. Women and children are among the most vulnerable strata for them.

She termed good communication as a key to social change and pressed the need for developing equitable, efficient and effective policies, strategies and programmes to ensure poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihood. In her view, these initiatives are possible only if social development is encouraged. Last but not least, she identified that the health and education of women is frequently compromised. So, she emphasized on learning from the past experiences and strongly supported the women empowerment for healthy nation through educating the all levels of society.

Third speaker was Dr. Mehreen Farooqi from Australian Parliament. She made a statement at a very beginning of her speech that women are special as they can work

structurally and easily manage multitasking. While addressing the issue of climate change, she highlighted its adverse impacts experienced by those who have little or no input in causing them e.g. hottest years ever recorded, flooding, drought and changing patterns of rainfall. She identified women as severely affected group from climate change because of many reasons such as in many societies women are responsible for water and fire wood collection and as a consequence of climate change most of the regions around the globe are confronting water shortage and drought, making it difficult for women to find water and fuel for their families. Moreover, it has also resulted in wastage of time which could have been utilized for other productive works. She concluded by acknowledging the initiatives and working of WPC and requested everyone to unite, work and fight for this noble cause.

Fourth speaker of the day was Dr Sudarshini Fernandopulle from Sri Lanka. She shared Sri Lankan journey towards the achievement of SDGs. She highlighted the implementation of SDGs at the parliamentary level in Sri Lanka. She also mentioned the establishment of Sri Lankan

National Policy and National Development Programmes on SDG's. Furthermore, she shed light on the achievement of Goal 5 by mentioning the fact that current quota of women at government level is 25% which has been asked to enhance up to 30%. They also have a chapter of women rights related to laws, resources and opportunities for women. Lastly, she mentioned the active participation of Sri Lankan women in workshops and discussions regarding the adaptation of SDG's and their suggestions are also valued.

Next speaker was Honourable MNA Shehryar Khan Afridi. He said that when we talk about SDGs we must internalize one key thing, this thing is "education". If we are not aware of our roles and responsibilities and if we don't build bridges for solutions then these issue that we face will persist and humanity will suffer. So, we need to make sure that all the parliamentarians and citizens must be aware of SDGs in order to make our voice heard globally. He also mentioned that women have a pivotal role in the society. They are an inspiration from both religious and cultural perspective. To conclude, he requested all citizens of Pakistan to unite and send a strong national message to all international communities that we will

"...Humanity should not suffer..."

Mr. Shehryar Khan Afridi
Honourable MNA

resolve our issues and we will survive and do our level best to achieve SDGs and human development.

Last speaker from the panel was Honourable Ms. Ammy Amalia Fatma Surya from Indonesian parliament. She highlighted the current programmes in the sector of health and education that are being implemented in Indonesia. In terms of development in health sector, Indonesian Government has initiated Indonesia Health Programme under which access to various health facilities are made easy for citizens.

In her speech she accepted the lack of education as the main problem. In Indonesia during 2015-16, 1 million students could not proceed to higher education. Therefore, Indonesian Government has issued “Indonesia Smart Program” with the objective to establish healthy, educated, creative and confident citizens capable of solving their own problems. The Card issued under this programme can also be used to exchange the education cost to schools and to exchange school needs but this card cannot be used to draw money it only provides provision for school, it is like a scholarship program.

Second phase of their development in education sector is “to strengthen the educator” in which teachers were given

special education to increase their quality as an educator because it was observed that large number of students are unsatisfied from teaching methods in practice. Third phase is focusing on increased infrastructure building to ensure easy access to schools and colleges as Indonesia has many Islands and 60% of the total area is covered with water making it difficult for many students to reach their respective institutes on time.



DAY THREE: WEDNESDAY MARCH 15TH, 2017

PLENARY FOUR

THEME: STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACIES; WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS AS AGENT OF CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION FOR THEIR SOCIETIES



The third day of the international conference commenced with fourth plenary on Wednesday March 15th, 2017 and initiated a thought provoking discussion on the role of women to influence the political agenda, policy making and legislation for inclusive sustainable development. The sharing of experiences by international participants added enormous insights into shared understanding of promoting gender equality and women proactive participation in political decision making.

The Panellists for the fourth plenary session included;

- Ms. Marvi Memon (Chairperson BISP);
- MNA Fouzia Hameed;
- Fouzia Viqar (Chairperson PCSW)
- Delegate from Jordan;
- Delegate from Myanmar;
- Delegate from Kyrgyzstan.

The session started with the Delegate from Jordan addressing the participants. The Honourable delegate highlighted the role of the Jordanian constitution was playing to ensure women's rights. She urged that women need to be politically aware in order to fight against all forms of discrimination in order to make changes in the society. The Jordanian constitution gives great importance

to women rights. An amendment was made in 2011 which compels women to be highlighted in every field. She mentioned that due to the male dominated and tribal nature of the Jordanian society, the likelihood of women being elected is low. However, in the House of Representatives there are 20 women out of 130 total members. Women are also a part of the Senate. Moreover, the House of Representatives has a separate council which deals with the issues and legislation related to women. It is also responsible for holding conferences and workshops for women. Likewise, a coalition has been formed which consists of many women from Arab states. The Delegate applauded the work of King Abdullah and considered him as a firm supporter of women's rights; he was the first one to introduce the quota system for women. Finally, the delegate congratulated the WPC on organizing such a conference by stating that it is a good opportunity to highlight the injustice for a woman faces in different fields.

The second speaker was Dr. Fouzia Hameed, Member National Assembly of Pakistan. She highlighted the significant role women's entry in the parliament has played in creating a genuine interest in politics amongst women. Sustainable Development is based on the three pillars of economics,

environment and social development. Dr. Fouzia highlighted that gender equality is a major part of the social aspect of sustainable development. Due to the participation of women parliamentarians, women specific issues have been legislated e.g. gender biases, honour killings, domestic violence and harassment of women in the workplace. She mentioned that despite the presence of 22% women in the Parliament of Pakistan, women are still denied important ministerial positions as well as chairmanship of important standing committees. There are no women leaders of deputy leader in political parties of Pakistan. For her, this was a very discouraging aspect for female political workers. According to her, women in the reserved seats have a greater mandate as compared to their male colleagues. However, no funds are issued to them to realize their mandate. She urged that there is a need to tackle these issues with a comprehensive approach. She requested her colleagues to make consolidated, constructive and purpose oriented efforts to prove themselves as agents of change in order to:

- Translate the pending/ proposed bills on women oriented issues into acts as soon as possible;
- Formulate strategies for implementation of women specific legislation in true spirit;

- Make strategies for creation of awareness among women regarding their rights and provision of legal aid to needy women.

Finally, she expressed her optimism and concluded by saying that we must adopt the theme of International Women's Day 2017, "be bold for change," and thanked the WPC.

The next speaker was the Delegate from Myanmar. She began by expressing that this conference was an important meeting for discussing women related issues. Women form 50.8% of Myanmar's population and also half of their labour force. She mentioned that even though there are a number of labour laws in Myanmar which provide social protection to women, such as maternity leave and other social benefits, but their enforcement and implementation is ineffective. There is also the issue of less pay as compared to male workers working in identical conditions. Protection against sexual harassment in the work place, appropriate emergency medical response, social security measures in hazardous work conditions and allocation of funds for women are still inadequate. Due to the deteriorating economic conditions, conflicts, natural disasters, lack of job opportunities and low wages in Myanmar, many women have lost agricultural land and have migrated to Thailand, Malaysia or Singapore in search of better income. She emphasized the following

need to be done in order to revive the living conditions of women in Myanmar:

- Review current labour laws in terms of fulfilling the needs to women workers;
- Collect accurate gender specific data so that adequate standards can be created for women workers regarding job opportunities;
- Increase civil society participation in order to strengthen to decision making processes of the executive, legislative and judicial bodies.

She concluded by thanking the WPC and applauded the conference for promoting women's role in building democratic societies, social justice and peace.

The fourth speaker was the Honourable Delegate from Kyrgyzstan. The Delegate expressed her deep appreciation for the conference and thanked the organizers for the opportunity to participate. She began by stating that since 2010, after the Kyrgyz Revolution, Kyrgyzstan has made vital progressive steps in terms of women's development. It was the first in the region to adopt democracy and the first and only country in the region to have a woman president. The number of women in politics has significantly increased over the years. She mentioned that women's participation in political parties is very important and a part

of the law in Kyrgyzstan. She also highlighted that women's involvement in decision making is a sign of developed societies. In Kyrgyzstan, women's participation and promotion of gender equality is a part of all three pillars of state: legislation, executive and judiciary. She mentioned that much legislation has been adopted to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women in Kyrgyzstan. They have a Women's Forum in the Parliament which deals with women specific issues such as reproductive rights and violence etc. They are consistently working to improve the framework for gender equality and fulfilling the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In Kyrgyzstan, CEDAW is in direct implementation and is a strong part of legislation. Recently, government have made remarkable efforts in removing the laws from the constitution which allowed child marriage and also made pro women amendments to the family and criminal laws. Also a law for the protection against violence has been passed. She concluded by stating that despite these developments, politics remains male dominated and women need to gain more experience in order to achieve gender equality.

The last speaker of the session was Honourable Ms. Marvi Memon, Member National Assembly of Pakistan. She congratulated the WPC and acknowledged their immense efforts. She highlighted that real change comes from the grass root levels. She stated that there is need to celebrate those women who are at the grassroots, who have worked for other women, those who have put aside their party conflicts and worked collectively, and those who have survived discrimination against themselves in politics. She applauded all the women present in the conference for being fighters and survivors and for being the real agents of change. She mentioned two legislations which have brought about massive change for the women in Pakistan:

- Acid Legislation; which became the subject of Pakistan's first Oscar.
- Benazir Income Support Programme; which is the largest platform for women empowerment in Pakistan.

She highlighted that women were able to achieve these goals because women acted collectively putting aside all their differences. She concluded by saying that the competition needs to go beyond women and that we need to work towards our collective goal of women empowerment. We should work together for the betterment of ourselves and future generation. She stated that women

parliamentarians should devote their time
and efforts for those in need.



CLOSING PLENARY

“BUILDING ALLIANCES – WOMEN AND PARLIAMENTARIANS WORKING TOGETHER

The closing plenary on “Building Alliance-Women and Parliamentarians Working Together” commenced with an insightful and compelling dialogue on building alliances for the promotion of women empowerment agenda and strengthen the existing regional women parliamentarians associations and to foster effective coordination between women organizations, civil society and women in Parliament.

The panellists consists of the entire working Council of WPC included:

- Ms. Fehmida Mirza, Former Speaker NA (Chair of Plenary)

- Honourable Dr. Atiya Inayatullah
- Honourable Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja;
- Honourable Ms. Nafeesa Inayatullah Khan Khattak;
- Honourable Ms. Tahira Aurangzeb;
- Honourable Ms. Naeema Kishwar Khan;
- Honourable Ms. Naseema Hafeez Panezai;
- Honourable Ms. Shaista Pervaiz Malik.

Dr. Atiya Inayatullah opened the plenary with a token of appreciation and acknowledgement for the women and man champions of woman empowerment. She believed that it's more than appropriate to end the efforts of two days on connectivity

and building alliances. *“Women are meeting cross culture in Islamabad and we are challenging the commonality of our inequality,”* said Dr. Atiya. She expressed gratitude for the hard work of WPC which provided a platform for the women across the culture to share their experiences. She pressed the continuity of this unity and solidarity for the time to come in the form of and reminded the audience the working of a remarkable feminist Ms. Isabel Allende who said, *“I can promise you that*

“Dream! And dream as much as you can even it is to dream that you conquer the world but let us not forget one thing and that is what you are is God’s gift to you, what you make of yourself is your gift to God.”

- Dr. Atiya Inayatullah

women working together – linked, informed and educated – can bring peace and prosperity to this forsaken planet.”

She articulated her beliefs about the progress of women working together. Her entire narrative revolved around the role of constitution, laws, academia, media, civil society and state machinery e.g. parliamentary community, judiciary for the achievement of women rights. Discussing the achievements of struggle for women rights in Pakistan she informed the audience that Constitution of Pakistan provides a very favourable environment to women. Pakistan is first among the community of nations to have a clause in Constitution that forbids discrimination against women. It also prohibits the formulation of any discriminatory law. Above all, Pakistani

Commission on Status of Women. She emphasized on extended role of media



and civil society. She appreciated the initiatives taken by judiciary for violence and injustice against the women especially “sue motto power” through which it had taken up the various cases which is very encouraging. She hoped for further measures for protection of women in lower judiciary.

She advised women to abandon reactive attitude to become proactive. She paid tribute to all wonderful women who

“...they would never leave a vacuum. There are two women in political life for whom I appeal, one is Ms. Kalsoom Nawaz Sharif...and the second is Ms. Nusrat Bhutto...”

- Dr. Atiya Inayatullah

women are fortunate to get their political space and reservation right in the constitution. She highlighted the especially reserved seats in Federal and Provincial Assemblies for women to ensure their inclusion in political process. She appreciated the 33% representation of women in political decision making bodies. Furthermore, she pointed to various state machineries working for women empowerment e.g. WPC, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and National

struggled and sacrificed in traditional patriarchal society of Pakistan and placed Benazir Bhutto at the epitome of this struggle in political realm. She also mentioned the contributions of women in education, sports, armed forces and arts.

While deliberating on the role of alliance and connectivity, she specified that there is

“I don’t want women to have power over men, I want women to have power over themselves.”

- Dr. Atiya Inayatullah

enough evidence based information that alliances reduce pressure and exchange of these alliances is very imperative for condensation. Alliances generate networks which create pressure points to influence change. Alliances also enhance leadership, she added.

She suggested a future agenda for WPC, which is to necessarily bridge the distance between male and female human beings, female and male tasks because these are all the human tasks. Finally, she appreciated and thanked PIPS for providing high quality research assistance in all efforts of WPC.

The thought provoking speech by Honourable Dr. Atiya Inayatullah was followed by an eloquent address of former Speaker NA and founding member of WPC Honourable Ms. Fahmida Mirza. On the behalf of WPC, she expressed gratitude to all foreign delegates who participated in the conference e.g. Australia, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, Jordan, Kyrgstan, Maldives, Nepal, Romani, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Turkey. She termed these participations in the conference as an unprecedented expression of Pakistan's unflinching resolve to envy the voices of women. She termed the women parliamentarians and leaders "the catalyst" of democracy, peace and women

empowerment. She saw the future of women empowerment as promising. Furthermore, she is of view that the concept of patriarchy is not confined within borders. Therefore, women's collective actions should go beyond these arbitrary boundaries. Subsequently, all participating women are a mosaic of unique narrative and diverse background. However, all women parliamentarians are under the common goals of combating the systematic injustices towards marginalized groups. She pressed that women can't be left out of the decision making role and asserted the motto "Nothing about us, doubt us." Relating to her inaugural speech she again emphasized that all 17 goals of SGDs impacts women's life. So, women must be included in every step to substantiate the effective change. Pakistan's government is the first power that institutionalized the oversight and monitoring of SDGs by establishing the parliamentary secretariat which is headed by the women Minister Honourable Ms. Marriyum Aurangzeb.



Expressing her thought on the working of the conference, she said “In these two days of the conference, all participants deliberated through thematic sessions on terrorism, biases, and ignorance and building alliances and concluded that women should be included in peace dialogues as they are the worst and direct affectee of war, terrorism and violence.” She emphasized on maintaining the collective momentum and called upon all members of parliament from all participating countries to establish a coalition and persuade their respective governments to prioritize social justice. Additionally, transform these concepts into a permanent network of women parliamentarians for democracy and social justice which will enable all here to meet annually and provide a platform to share knowledge, formulate actions plans and unveil a future strategy of empowerment for our population. She thanked all international delegates for their support and participation throughout the conference which has opened new avenues of cooperation and friendship

between countries and their people. She emphasized on concrete action when she said “the distance between your dreams and action is called action. She extended Pakistan WPC’s full support to participating countries in establishing WPC in their respective parliaments. She also announced the WPC Pakistan is opening its membership for men and women parliamentarians and civil society members to join as friends of WPC. She concluded with the token of appreciation for working Council and Secretary of WPC, Speaker NA and entire organizing team.

The conference concluded with the presentation of Islamabad Declaration, Resolution and Note of Thank you by Ms. Shaista Pervaiz Malik. It was unanimously endorsed to take forward the Resolution adopted for building alliances in spirit of Islamabad Declaration. The international delegates thanked the WPC in Pakistan for convening the conference.

RESOLUTION

[As Approved Unanimously]

The delegates to the International Conference organized by the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus on the theme “Role of Women Parliamentarians in Strengthening Democracy and Social Justice,” organized on the 13 – 15 March 2017, at Islamabad, agreed to;

Reaffirming the role of women parliamentarians in promoting democracy and social justice, and for strengthening democratic institutions;

Recalling the struggles and contributions of women, across regions to build a just and a human rights based society;

Commending the women leaders who stand out in the world for their exemplary leadership;

Exemplifying women parliamentarians' central role in raising a voice for gender justice, equality and empowerment;

Noting with concern, the empirical evidence that highlights persistence of gender inequalities in education, health and economic development, with women still trailing far behind;

Believing that it is imperative for women to assume a central role in decision making of our nations;

HEREBY ADOPT THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT AND AGREE TO UNDERTAKE THE FOLLOWING:

1. Endorse the need to sustain and empower this important event of women parliamentarians across regions;
2. Resolve that our foremost responsibility is to continue our partnership and build meaningful parliamentary alliances with each other in order to influence governments to prioritise the promotion of democracy through social justice and sustainable development, to share expertise regarding oversight of the executive, and to advocate for and enact people-focused legislation, especially for women;
3. Further invite to build through this forum, a network of “Women Parliamentarians for Social Justice, Equality and Democracy” to share and exchange our experiences and

best practices in order to strengthen and make more effective our role as parliamentarians;

4. Call to raise a collective voice for mainstreaming and increasing women's meaningful representation on all democratic and political forums, including our national parliaments, provincial assemblies and local councils;
5. Encourage to prioritize and build a common vision for the empowerment of women for promotion of gender equality in social, political and economic fields;
6. Resolve to further recognize the widespread discrimination leading to disadvantages for women, our parliamentary agenda will focus on:

- Combating all forms of discrimination and violence against women
- Ensuring reproductive health and rights
- Promoting access to education
- Guaranteeing women's inclusion in democratic processes and institutions
- Eliminating gender inequalities in employment;

We, women parliamentarians from twelve countries from across regions, including Australia, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Iran, Turkey, Romania, Jordan, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, and Indonesia, meeting for the first time in Islamabad on the occasion of International Women's Day 2017 organized by the Women's Parliamentary Caucus Pakistan, **agree** to take this initiative forward by participating in this Network;

The Women's Parliamentary Caucus Pakistan will set up a women's parliamentary network that can develop into a continued platform to encourage regular intra regional interaction, support democratic norms and build alliances for sustained development and peaceful cooperation;

Further **propose** that Pakistan, the host country's Working Council of WPC take the lead in setting up this network in consultation with the member countries; and to serve as the Secretariat of this forum;

ISLAMABAD DECLARATION

We, the participants of the International Conference on the “*Role of Women Parliamentarians in Strengthening Democracy and Social Justice*” held on 13th- 15th March, 2017, in Islamabad, Pakistan, laud the organizers, the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus (WPC), and **appreciate** the Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq who, in his opening remarks, re-iterated his unconditional support for the empowerment of women in public and private spaces;

Women parliamentarians from Central Asia, Eastern Europe, Middle East, South West and South Asia and Asia Pacific, undaunted by the challenges before us, gathered in the spirit of 2017 International Women’s Day “Be Bold for Change.” **Our conviction that ‘progress can be achieved, must be achieved, and will be achieved’, was reflected well in the deliberations;**

We deliberated in detail, the idea of articulating the women parliamentarians’ narratives on the imperative need to strengthen democracy through social justice to secure mutual well-being, peace and harmony of our nations and societies.

The Conference provided an opportunity for the women parliamentarians to express their profound resolve towards prioritizing their mandated role of women empowerment. With sub-themes of confronting terrorism for a peaceful democratic world, confronting biases for an inclusive society and the role of Women Parliamentarians in accelerating the progress towards achievement of sustainable development goals and human rights.

The Plenary Session presentations which were substantive and substantial led to informed, positive and result orientated thematic group discussions. A point in case is that whilst continuing hindrances, both economic and social, in women’s participation in politics were flagged, sound “way forward” solutions were identified; And in the session on Sustainable Development Goals, the sharing by Pakistan was welcomed and termed as a global good practice. There was also agreement that whilst Pakistan was rich in women specific legislation, there was an unacceptable implementation vacuum which called for good governance, media advocacy and addressal of social and cultural biases;

The Women’s Parliamentary Caucus, Pakistan thanks the delegates participating from thirteen countries, including Australia, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Romania, Sri Lanka and Turkey. There was extensive country specific

information sharing. The event is a defining moment in engaging women parliamentarians to share knowledge and formulate action plans to unveil a future strategy of empowerment of their peoples;

The Conference unanimously adopts the following:

- 1) To establish a pro-active network among women parliamentarians to advocate that our respective governments give priority to social justice for all citizens especially 'equality' in creating and offering opportunities to both men and women alike;
- 2) To engage women parliamentarians to share knowledge, best practices and formulate action-plans to unveil a future strategy of empowerment of their populations;
- 3) To revive and promote our indigenous values and common cultural heritage across regions, that can promote people to people contact for peace, harmony and development;
- 4) To recognize the tragic consequences of and critical effects of terrorism on millions of people around the world, and to note the situation of refugees, migrants, or internally displaced persons especially the women and children irrespective of their race, religion and nationality. We undertake to create enabling conditions for voluntary repatriation of refugees, in safety and dignity to their countries of origin and re-integration in their societies;
- 5) Reiterate the need for the effective realization of the right of self determination as enunciated in the UN Charter, and reaffirm the basic human_right of self-determination for all those living under all forms of alien domination or foreign occupation;

[Kyrgyzstan expressed its reservations on Section 5]

- 6) Our commitment is to strengthen democracy through a concerted effort to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals, which are transformative for girls and women for gender equality, educational attainment, family planning/ reproductive care services, politics, and economic empowerment. The Pakistan parliamentary oversight of SDGs' implementation model will be shared through IPU, CPA and other such bodies;

- 7) Reiterate the scourge of terrorism and extremism in all its forms and manifestations is amongst the greatest threats to humanity. The assembled parliamentary community of women pledges to understand and address the root causes of terrorism and tackle conditions that lead to violent extremism and radicalization, and promote non-violence, tolerance, and diversity including through inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue and cooperation for greater understanding and harmony. It was also acknowledged and agreed that more women be integrated in law enforcement and security agencies and participate at all levels in developing counter terrorism strategies and rehabilitation plans, especially for children, widows, single mothers, single/separated women, women with disabilities, and the destitute.
- 8) Accept that as leaders in the political domain, we commit to work for policies, laws and practices which broaden women's political, economic, social and cultural opportunities and promote full participation in political decision making. *Interalia:*
 - i. In a call for "Zero Tolerance to Violence," the urgency was expressed for the enactment and enforcement of laws against all forms of violence including domestic violence, which is deemed to be one of the most pervasive of human rights violations that denies women and girls equality, dignity, security, and right to enjoyment of fundamental freedoms;
 - ii. To work for change in the political paradigm to being more inclusive of women, persons with special needs, all genders, and minorities. The call is for engendered political parties, and affirmative action from the grassroots to national level;
 - iii. Reaffirms that to engage with men as partners is crucial to women's empowerment further in the 21st century direction is to empower women within the orbit of humankind;
9. It was unanimously endorsed to take forward the Resolution adopted for building alliances in the spirit of Islamabad;
10. The Iranian delegate moved a motion which was unanimously adopted with acclamation that each year, 15th of March, be celebrated as the day of "Women, Democracy and Social Justice."

The Women's Parliamentary Caucus in Pakistan is thanked for convening the international Conference on the "Role of Women Parliamentarians in Strengthening Democracy and Social Justice." The leadership given by the National Assembly Speaker, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq is deeply appreciated and the hard work and hospitality of the Organizing Committee acclaimed;

MESSAGE OF SECRETARY WPC MNA MS. SHAISTA PERVAIZ MALIK

On behalf of Working Council of WPC, I take this opportunity to express profound gratitude to all the international delegates who travelled all the way to Pakistan with a firm conviction to deliberate upon strengthening the role of women in fostering inclusive democracy and social justice. We are convinced that the success of the International Conference on "Role of Women Parliamentarians in Strengthening Democracy and Social Justice" from 13th-15th March, 2017 would have never been possible without your enthusiastic participation in plenary sessions and keen interest in objectives of the conference.

The Women Parliamentary Caucus has demonstrated an unflinching resolve to enhance women's proactive participation in political decision making. After successfully hosting this international conference, we are determined to take our mission to an unprecedented level. Being cognizant of the fact that gender discrimination and uneven development cannot be confined to a particular territory, this conference sought to build alliances beyond the region to facilitate equal development and political participation of women to build inclusive democracy. The success story of women's political and economic empowerment is a continuous journey of struggle and resilience against all odds...

I take this opportunity to thank the Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq for his generous support and firm commitment to the advancement of the cause of women empowerment. Finally, I would like to thank my team of WPC, National Assembly Secretariat, PIPS and all the Young Parliamentary Subject Experts who actively fulfilled their responsibilities. Without their passionate assistance this conference would have never been possible.

