

**Pakistan's Statement during the adoption of the UPR Report during the
22nd session of the Human Rights Council, Geneva**

(14 March 2013)

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to express deep appreciation to those who participated in the interactive dialogue, as well as the members of the Troika – China, Chile and Congo and the Secretariat, for their support in the conduct of our UPR in October last year.

2. Pakistan attaches great importance to this universal mechanism as it has been designed to review country situations in a constructive, objective and cooperative manner by extending equal treatment for all States. The first cycle of the UPR, and our own experience of this UPR, reconfirm our conviction that this mechanism has a huge potential to contribute towards improving the human rights situation on the ground. Therefore the international community must continue its endeavors to support and strengthen this mechanism.

Mr. President,

3. Pakistan participated in the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review in a constructive and inclusive manner. The interactive dialogue with the member states provided us an opportunity to highlight significant strides made by Pakistan for the protection and promotion of human rights as well as to take stock of the challenges that we face in the full realization of the human rights of our citizens.

4. It is a matter of great satisfaction that there was positive recognition of our endeavors and that many of the measures taken by the government were acknowledged and commended by member states. We see these efforts as “work in progress”.

5. In total, Pakistan received 166 recommendations during the review. It may be recalled that Pakistan rejected one recommendation during the Working Group session and said we would respond to the remaining 165 recommendations during the adoption of the outcome of Pakistan's UPR during the 22nd session of the Council.

6. Following the adoption of the UPR report on Pakistan by the Working Group on 2nd November 2012, the 165 recommendations were sent to all concerned departments for consideration and response.

7. We are pleased to inform the Council that out of the 165 recommendations, on which we are required to convey our position today, 126 recommendations enjoy the support of the Government of Pakistan. Out of these 126 recommendations, 73 recommendations have either already been implemented or are in the process of implementation. 34 recommendations have been noted by the Government of Pakistan. These recommendations have not been rejected as such, but the due process of consultations on them has not been completed on time. We shall continue deliberations on these recommendations.

8. Seven recommendations were not accepted by the Government of Pakistan. These pertain to the repeal of blasphemy laws and the abolition of the death penalty. While the Government has accepted and is already implementing recommendations that call on it to take measures to prevent the misuse of blasphemy laws, there is no national consensus on the repeal of these laws. As regards, the abolition of the death penalty, this is a matter for the Parliament to decide. The executive can only impose an unofficial moratorium on executions which is already in place.

9. A number of recommendations were made regarding the ratification of international human rights instruments. It is important to underscore that the Government of Pakistan is committed to the promotion and realization of universally recognized human rights and is party to 7 core international human rights instruments. At present, the Government is focusing on the implementation of these Conventions. Its accession to new international instruments is examined under a constant and gradual process in which the implications of ratification are considered in terms of consistency and adaptation of national law and practice, and also in terms of the financial implications of the effective implementation of the instruments concerned.

Mr. President,

10. Several recommendations were made for the promotion and protection of rights of women. We are pleased to inform the Council that on 12th February 2013, Pakistan presented its Fourth Periodic Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The CEDAW experts acknowledged the resolve of the government to advance women's rights and appreciated the steps taken so far in this regard.

Mr. President,

11. A number of recommendations were made to continue our national efforts to design and implement policies and programmes aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of our people. We are encouraged to note that the

international community values the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to poverty alleviation and improving the living standards of its citizens.

12. We recognize the fact that no country can embark upon the path to prosperity without ensuring universal education to its future generation. Therefore, Pakistan enacted the Free and Compulsory Education Bill 2012 in December last to provide free and compulsory education to all children.

Mr. President,

13. As regards the recommendations made for the promotion and protection of the rights of minorities in Pakistan, all minorities are equal citizens of Pakistan and enjoy equal rights and protection. The extremist ideology espoused by a misguided fringe minority cannot undermine rights given to minorities by Islam and the constitution of Pakistan. In order to promote interfaith dialogue and harmony, the Ministry of National Harmony has recently organized National Interfaith and Inter-Cultural Conference on 20-22 February 2013 with the view to promote harmony amongst followers of different faiths.

14. We agree that more needs to be done for the welfare of minorities in Pakistan. But it is important to underscore that there is no organized official intolerance toward religious minorities in Pakistan. Most cases of excess against members of the minority communities are on account of personal animosities or an endeavor by a few extremist elements to impose their own agenda on both majority and minority communities.

Mr. President,

15. The people of Pakistan are committed to democratic ideals. Tomorrow on 15th March, a democratically elected Government would complete its five year term. The democratic government, in its five years tenure, has made significant strides for the promotion of democracy and human rights in the country by passing landmark legislation for strengthening democracy, promoting rule of law and protecting human rights.

16. As a democratic state, Pakistan fully recognizes that democracy cannot thrive without free and fair elections. In order to ensure free and fair elections, a number of steps have been taken to strengthen the independence of the Election Commission of Pakistan through the 19th and 20th Amendments to the Constitution.

Mr. President,

17. In conclusion, let me reiterate that we are fully aware of the challenges that we face in the realm of human rights and we had openly acknowledged these challenges in our interactive dialogue in October last year with a view to dealing with them in a comprehensive manner. Let me reassure you that these challenges are not due to discriminatory government policies or lack of commitment to protect and uphold human rights. The government and people of Pakistan remain fully committed to democracy, freedom, justice and the rule of law. We remain committed also to vigorously protecting and promoting the human rights of our people as well as fulfilling all our international human rights obligations.

I thank you.