

Government committed to women empowerment: Fauzia Gilani



BRUSSELS, Apr 10 (APP): Gender equality is not only ingrained in Pakistan's ethical and value system, but our faith Islam also teaches us utmost respect for dignity of women and the girl child. Begum Fauzia Yusuf Raza Gilani said while speaking at an international conference on 'Enhancing Women's Dignity', here Saturday. The special session organized under the aegis of Crans Montana Forum in collaboration with Director General UNESCO was dedicated to promoting women's dignity in all its forms and manifestations.

Begum Fauzia Gilani informed the conference participants that Father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah placed great emphasis on active participation of women in all facets of national life.

This torch of women empowerment, their inclusion in national life and gender equality was carried forward by Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto who was the first elected women Prime Minister in the Muslim world and a staunch advocate for rights of women and children.

She stated in the light of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's philosophy, the democratically elected government in Pakistan has chalked out a four-pronged strategy to empower women and the girl child in the country.

The strategy's main thrust is to reduce poverty amongst the female gender, promote gender equality, end violence against women, empower women through political participation, legislative and institutional restructuring, employment in the public sector, and gender responsive policy and budgeting, Begum Fauzia Gilani underscored.

She informed the gathering that women in Pakistan have assumed an increased and active role in every sphere of life including conventional and non-conventional fields including the Armed Forces.

Our women diplomats are steadily gaining prominence in key world capitals with 11 women diplomats serving as Ambassadors in different countries. Women are also making a mark in major sporting events at international level. Pakistani women also playing a major role in agriculture, livestock and cottage industries, she said.

In the political arena, Pakistan today has 94 female members in both houses of the Parliament. In order to further strengthen their nation building role, a women Parliamentarians Caucus has been constituted in the parliament to liaise and build a working relationship with key state and civil society institutions and organizations.

Recently the Parliament adopted 'the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Bill'. Pakistan now stands as a leading country in South Asia for having a specific legislation against sexual harassment at workplace, she added.

Begum Gilani said the Parliament is also working on legislation against domestic violence, which will make Pakistan one of the first Muslim countries to have progressive legislation for redressal through the judicial system.

On the occasion of International Women's Day on 8th March this year, the Prime Minister has announced the establishment of the office of Woman's Ombudsman; total administrative and financial autonomy to National Commission for the Status of Women; 10 percent quota reserved for employment of women on merit and across the board, she informed.

Begum Fauzia Gilani further said that like all other societies Pakistan also has a fair share of challenges in fulfilling the dream of complete emancipation of women.

However, Government of Pakistan is committed to overcome these challenges and is making serious endeavours to empower women because we in Pakistan believe that: "When women thrive, all of society benefits, and succeeding generations are given a better start in life," (Kofi Annan).

A number of first ladies, who are involved in the political, economic and social dimensions of uplifting women's dignity in their respective countries, participated in the conference.