



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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OF PAKISTAN DELEGATION

ON AGENDA ITEM 70

PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

AT THE

THIRD COMMITTEE

62ND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK
30 OCTOBER 2007

Pakistan's Statement on Human Rights Questions

Mr. Chairman

We thank the Secretary General for the several reports presented under the agenda items of promotion and protection of human rights. Last week's deliberations on these reports and the dialogue with the Special Rapporteurs have been both informative and revealing.

Mr. Chairman

The 62nd session of the Third Committee is particularly significant as we embark upon the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights during this session.

In our pursuit to achieve the objectives of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international community has gone a long way in evolving a galaxy of instruments and declarations that uphold the principles of promoting and protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

The central objectives of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are humanity, equality and equity as enshrined in article 1 "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". It also underlines the correlation between civil and political rights on the one hand and the economic, social and cultural rights on the other.

The real question is how this aspiration is to be achieved? It cannot be realized when almost one-third of the world's people live in abject poverty. Twenty-thousand people in our world die each day from hunger, poverty and preventable diseases. Their freedom to live in dignity cannot be realized unless they are freed from the shackles of poverty. As they say, a hungry man is not a free man.

The right to life is the most fundamental for all human beings, yet it continues to be threatened by want and by war and violence. Millions of people suffer brutality in hundreds of conflicts which rage across the world, especially in the poorest countries – sparked and sustained by the politics of scarcity, greed and exploitation. Millions also suffer under the heel of foreign occupation, denied the fundamental freedom encompassed in the Charter and in the first article in both the two International Covenants – the right to self-determination.

Despite the encouraging progress in the last six decades to promote universal respect for human rights, there are significant challenges that still

confront humanity. The goal to “promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom” is still far from realized for at least half of the world’s population.

Regrettably, within the United Nations, the promotion of human rights has often been used as an instrument of political pressure and interference in domestic affairs of member States. Many fear that it could also be used as justification even for military intervention.

In this context, we would like to make some suggestions, relating to both the substantive and structural aspects of human rights, with a view to improving the functioning of the United Nations human rights machinery.

First: Equal attention must be accorded to economic and social and civil & political rights. This has been agreed since the adoption of the International Covenants and, specifically, in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Yet, most of the advanced countries focus mainly on civil & political rights and refuse to even endorse the “Right to Development” as an equally binding human right.

Two: The focus of promotion of human rights in the developing countries should be on cooperation, technical assistance and human rights education to build capacity rather than on political pressure and interference in their internal affairs.

Three: We need to address squarely the growing menace of xenophobia, Islamophobia and related intolerances and the importance of dealing with the menace of these ominous phenomena before these tendencies become uncontrollable.

Fourth: Cultural diversity must be respected. While the norms of the UDHR are universal, each country must be allowed to attain them within its own socio-economic and cultural context. Hatred on the basis of ethnic and religious identities has become a serious problem. The human rights community working in and around the Human Rights Council must take cognizance of this phenomenon and help develop political, legal and cultural norms to combat religious intolerance and to reduce consequent economic and social costs. It is time we started thinking about drafting an international convention on combating defamation of religions.

Fifth: Double standards must be avoided in addressing “situations” of human rights. Some situations are prominently projected; other, equally serious, are ignored. Genuine human rights concerns should guide the work in this regard. Country-specific or region-specific consideration should focus mainly on situations of armed conflict – inter-State or intra-State – and specially situations of

foreign occupation and denial of the right of peoples to self-determination. It is in such situations that the gravest violations of human rights take place.

Sixth: Poverty, deprivation and social exclusion lead to extremism. Not in all cases; but in many situations. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action's call for the realization for the right to development remains as urgent today as it was in 1993. Poverty alleviation should become the central theme of the human right machinery if we want to move towards the realization of the economic and social rights of peoples; and their civil and political rights.

Seventh: Special procedures and mandates from the former CHR have proliferated, which require to be rationalized. Too many Special Rapporteurs focus mostly on civil & political issues; their mandates overlap, these mandates are loosely interpreted. Some Rapporteurs pursue their own agendas, straying far from their mandates. It is our hope that the Human Rights Council will remain seized to finish its responsibility in rationalization of these mandates in the coming sessions.

Eight: The OHCHR's Strategic Management Plan and its Annual Report 2006 emphasize on OHCHR's country engagement. Country engagement, regional offices and human rights advisers require prior consent of the concerned country before being established/stationed. In opening regional offices, the consent of the host country is not the only requirement. The countries of the region should also be consulted on the venue and mandate.

Mr. Chairman,

The advocacy, through the UN mechanisms, of the 'Values' of certain societies, merely because they are economically more advanced, is counterproductive. Our joint efforts to promote and protect human rights for all should discourage the practice of cultural hegemony in tandem with economic exploitation.

Many advocates of human rights do not see the gross contradiction in their own positions. For example, opposing death penalty and yet defending the right to abortion; pressing for the rights of women and children, while promoting social and moral norms that tend to destroy the family, the fundamental unit of a society, as recognized by the UDHR.

Finally, the creation of the Human Rights Council in March 2006 was a significant step in our efforts to reform the UN human rights machinery. It was the expectation that this new body will adopt a promotional and cooperative approach to human rights. The Human Rights Council has completed its first task of institution building and recommended a set of proposals including (i) Modalities

of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR); (ii) Review of the System of Special Procedures; (iii) Review of Confidential Complaint Procedure (1503); and (iv) a Code of Conduct for UN Human Rights Special Mechanisms. These recommendations of the HRC will be considered by the Third Committee in the coming days. The institution building package, despite its faults, has launched the substantive work of the HRC. It should not be opened for discussion or amendments.

It is our hope that the Human Rights Council will build a mechanism that would extricate human rights from the bitter past legacy of selectivity, politicization and double standards and move it to a higher plane of dialogue, cooperation, education and awareness raising.

I thank you.