Excellencies, Ladies & Gentleman!

The Beijing 4th World Conference 1995 presented a landmark in the global quest for ensuring gender equality and women’s empowerment. We are moving towards 2020 – the year of 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing + 25) and the five years milestone for sustainable development goals. Pakistan’s commitment to women empowerment is derived from our founding father, the Quaid-e-Azams’ vision, who said “no nation can make any progress without active involvement of women”. Based on the vision of founding father and ideals espoused by our Constitution, Pakistan continues to make efforts to empower women and make them an active partner in national development.

As a follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995 and to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, the Government of Pakistan had launched a National Plan of Action (NPA) for Women in 1998, indicating interventions on 12 critical areas identified in Beijing with one additional area (Women with Disabilities), followed by National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women, 2002. These provided strategic actions for social, economic, political and legal empowerment of Pakistani women. Pakistan attended almost all the Beijing review meetings held at UN level. Recently, the Government has submitted Beijing Plus 25 Review Report, indicating progress in 12 critical areas and challenges to achieve the unfinished agenda.

Pakistan affirmed its commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by adopting the Sustainable Development Goals as its own national development agenda through a unanimous National Assembly Resolution in 2016. Since then, the country has made considerable progress by mainstreaming these goals in national policies and strategies, including the Five – Year Plan, provincial growth strategies and Pakistan’s long-term development perspective. In 2018, the newly elected Government designed and approved a National SDGs Framework, approved by the National Economic Council, the country’s highest economic policy-
making forum that envisages a national vision to prioritize and localize SDGs. Learning from the experience of MDGs, Pakistan’s national and provincial assemblies established SDG Taskforces to oversee progress on the goals. Pakistan has submitted its Voluntary National Review during this year.

Excellencies!

Pakistan is party to seven core Human Rights Conventions including Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, which ensure Government’s commitment for protection of human rights including women’s development and empowerment. Treaty Implementation Cells have been established at the Federal and Provincial level for implementation of ratified Human Rights Conventions at the gross route level. Moreover, CEDAW Committees have been constituted at the Provincial level for implementation of the Convention at the gross-root level. Besides, Inter-Provincial Ministerial Group on gender is working as an advisory forum to recommend women’s empowerment related initiatives. Efforts are under way to continuously monitor implementation process of international commitments including Beijing platform for action through established mechanisms.

Conscious efforts have been made by the successive Government to mainstream women in power sharing and decision making process. Number of women in key decision making position has gradually increased due to growing awareness among women and the policies adopted by the Government. The National Assembly has a total of 342 members, including 60 seats reserved for women (22% women). In the Senate, 17% quota is also applied for women and the number of women Senators is 19 in the House out of 104. Other than elected and reserved seats in the national assembly, the current government has appointed three women ministers, one minister of state, and three women special assistants to the Prime Minister to ensure the representation of women in the Government.

Key steps have been taken to improve participation of women which include updating and improving the electoral rolls; administrative and legislative reforms such as re-polling in a constituency where the female turnout was below the
prescribed threshold; and special measures to register female voters as a result of which 4.3 million female voters were added. Besides, measures are underway to increase women's representation in local governments from the current level of 16.1%.

Women in Pakistan are playing active role in every field of life such as education, economy, health, social welfare, business, law enforcement agencies including police, army, air force and other traditional and nontraditional fields. Due to various measures, women’s are also represented in the judiciary, though their number in the superior courts is not very much high. Number of women lawyers in Pakistan is increasing rapidly and more women are entering in the legal profession than in previous years. Over the years women have been in high offices holding high profile offices as Prime Minister, Governor State Bank, Speakers, Ministers, Ambassadors, Vice Chancellors and Judges of the Superior Courts.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are among our top priorities, which have been reflected in five year plan launched by the Government indicating Policy Interventions for gender mainstreaming. Action Plan on Human Rights has also been launched by the Government to improve human rights situation in the country. The Action Plan sets four key human rights priority areas concerning vulnerable segments of the society including Protection of Women Rights.

Women Parliamentary Caucus, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Rights, Human Rights Cells in the Superior Courts and Independent Judiciary, vibrant civil society and free media are supplementing the Government efforts for protection and promotion of women’s rights in the country. Besides, independent Commissions for women, children and minorities; and exclusive National Commission on Human Rights have been established to monitor human rights situation in the country.

**Excellencies!**

Pakistan has taken significant measures in this regard during recent years. We have taken significant legislative initiatives to uplift the status of women in the
development process, particularly to address the issue of violence against women, anti women practices, harassment free environment at the workplace, protection of inheritance rights and social protection measures to uplift the status of women. Economic empowerment of women is one of the top priority of the present Government. The Government has issued an Ordinance ‘Enforcement of Women’s Property Rights Ordinance 2019 on 31st October, to address the customary barriers related to inheritance of property.

Gender Crime Centre has been established at the Federal level for collection of statistical data on Gender Based Violence and to devise policy by the Government accordingly. Women Protection Centres have been established all over the country to address the grievances women victim of violence alongwith Women Police Stations. A 24 hour Helpline (1099) has been established to provide free legal advice, redressal and referral mechanism.

**Excellencies!**

The Government has created Poverty Elevation & Social Security Division, recently for taking initiatives at the policy and programme level to mainstream poor segment of the society with particularly focus on women. In this regard, various programmes have been initiated under Benazir Income Support Programme, Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, Zakat, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund and Ehsaas Programme. Since its inception in 2008, BISP has grown rapidly; it is now the largest single cash transfer programme in Pakistan’s history. It has four component – Waseela-e-Rozgar (Technical & Vocational Education) Waseela-e-Haq (Micro Finance), Waseela-e-Sehat (Life & Health Insurance) and Waseela-e-Taleem (Primary Education). The quarterly cash grant has gradually been enhanced by the successive governments which currently stand at Rs. 5000/- per quarter per eligible beneficiary. The number of beneficiaries now stands at 5.8 million. Since inception, BISP has disbursed Rs 691.5 billion as cash transfers. BISP treats women as heads of families and transfers them payments directly, has not only empowered them socially but has also improved the nutrition status of the children.
Besides, Ehsaas Programme aimed at extensive poverty reduction with 115 policy actions that reach out across the country and across all administrative and legislative tiers. The Ehsaas program plans at leveraging 21st century tools such as using data and technology to create precision safety nets; promoting financial inclusion and access to digital services; supporting the economic empowerment of women; focusing on the central role of human capital formation for poverty eradication, economic growth and sustainable development; and overcoming financial barriers to accessing health and post-secondary education.

Our Government is making all out efforts to mainstream women in overall policy priorities and national development in line with our party’s manifesto, which emphasis on gender parity through increased women’s access to education, health care, economic opportunity and legal protection. We are mindful of our challenges as well and working hard to empower our institutions, building their capacities and taking new policy initiatives for gender equality in the country.

Pakistan accords high priority to regional collaboration and partnership, while realizing and recognizing gender equality for more prosperous world. In this regard, UNWOMEN, UNICEF, OIC, SAARC, Colombo Plan, SCO and SAIVAC are the key partners at the regional level for promotion of women rights in the country.

**Ladies & Gentleman!**

Pakistan stands ready and committed to earnestly working with members of international community towards a future where no one is left behind in the pursuit of self-fulfilment and prosperity.

Thank You.