



30th HRC Session
Statement by Pakistan on the Opening Statement by the High
Commissioner for Human Rights under Item 2
(14 September 2015)

Mr. President,

As a free and democratic society, Pakistan has no hesitancy in acknowledging our numerous human rights challenges, which we are trying to address in keeping with the due process of law. This is despite the fact that the country faces serious security threats posed by terrorists and extremists.

Pakistan has a sovereign Parliament, an independent judiciary, a free media and a vibrant and robust civil society. The media, besides aggressively monitoring government policies, works zealously to raise awareness among the people of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Our civil society is also playing a key role in fostering a culture of accountability and transparency and assisting in changing societal attitudes. Similarly our independent judiciary and the legal community have taken wide ranging steps for upholding the rule of law and ensuring the protection of constitutional rights of all citizens. The Supreme Court of Pakistan has also set up a Human Rights Cell, which functions under the direct supervision of the Chief Justice and addresses cases requiring urgent relief.

Pakistan is strongly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights. An independent National Commission for Human Rights has been established which has a wide-ranging mandate encompassing all aspects of human rights, including dealing with the rights of women, children and other vulnerable segments of the society and powers to take up complaints of human rights violations. A National Commission on Minorities is also fully functional since 2014 with the powers to address all aspects of minorities' rights in Pakistan.

A National Plan of Action on human rights is also presently under formulation which would play a central role in setting our strategic direction and key priorities and will align our interventions with our national and international obligations.

Mr President,

High Commissioner has referred to the issue of death penalty in his statement. Let me assure you that Pakistan being a responsible member of the Human Rights Council is clearly aware of international human rights law on the subject in all its contexts. The courts and judiciary in Pakistan is

professional and independent. There are a number of countries in the world which have death penalty as part of their domestic laws and Pakistan's counter-terrorism response to lift the temporary moratorium on death penalty for terrorism-related cases is in total compliance with both our national legislation and international human rights law. Also the UN General Assembly's non-binding resolution on "Moratorium on the use of the death penalty" was a voted resolution, further demonstrating a clear absence of international agreement on the question of the death penalty, including its prohibition. The use of the death penalty is a criminal justice issue and it is the sovereign right of States to determine their own criminal justice systems.

I thank you.