



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN **Geneva**

National statement, delivered by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Pakistan Permanent Representative to the UN, during Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women at the 44th Session of the Human Rights Council

(7 July 2020)

Madam President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur (SR) for her report.

We appreciate reflection of the SR on the challenges faced by women journalists and human rights defenders. Pakistan is mindful of its responsibilities to protect and uphold the rights of all women, to be free from violence.

With the dawn of social media and advancements in communication technologies, threats to the safety and dignity of women human rights defenders have also increased ranging from non-consensual dissemination of intimate data and images, dissemination of rape recordings, cyber stalking and harassment, trolling and sexual harassment etc. These are all serious crimes and must be dealt as such. These concerns also point out to the gap in the international system of any framework for regulating nefarious activities on the internet carried out under the garb of freedom of expression.

We believe that a multifaceted approach is needed for mainstreaming the role of women including the removal of barriers and bottlenecks, adopting measures to promote equality of opportunity and results, the elimination of misogyny and gender-sensitive mainstreaming in the policymaking processes. At the same time, institutional capacities should be optimized to handle cases of violence against women and threats and intimidation on the internet, and provide safe digital environment for women and girls to fully realize their potential.

Pakistan has taken a number of steps to protect the rights of its citizens, especially women and girls, on the internet. A hotline number, accessible 24hrs has been set-up by the Ministry of Human Rights to report any violation and get free of cost legal aid. The Federal Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 is aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of all on the internet in Pakistan and making digital environment much more secure for women and girls.

All cases of violence against women are taken seriously by the government and necessary action is taken. Due to free and vibrant media, reporting of such

incidents has increased, which has led to timely and punitive action against perpetrators of violence against women.

I thank you.