

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **SPECIFIC LEGISLATION AND INTENSIVE MASS AWARENESS CAMPAIGN IS REQUIRED FOR ENSURING EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN**

Islamabad: Appropriate and comprehensive legislation and intensified mass awareness campaign is required for ensuring equal employment opportunities for women and to protect them from gender discrimination. Mindset of the society could only be changed through strong commitment and sustained efforts at all levels. This was stated by Executive Director Parliamentarians commission for Human Rights Pakistan (PCHR) Ms. Kashmala Tariq MNA while addressing as chief guest at conclusion of one day National workshop on the topic of "Women's employment concerns and working conditions in Pakistan," jointly organized by the Parliamentarians Commission For human Rights(PCHR) and International Labour Organization (ILO) on Wednesday, August 16 at Parliaments lodges. Kashmala Tariq MNA, Maulana Rahmatullah Khalil MNA, Ms. Mehnaz Rafi MNA, Ms. Fouzia Wahab MNA, Ms. Parveen Sikandar Gill MPA(Punjab), Syed Talib Imam MPA (Sind), Shafique Ahmed Khan MPA (Balochistan), Rahmat Saleh Baloch MPA (Balochistan), Dr. Ishaque Baloch (Balochistan), Shamim Ara Parwar MPA(Sind), Farheen Mughal MPA (Sind), Shaheen Attique-ur-Rehman MPA (Punjab),Nighat Orakzai MPA (NWFP), Shafique Chaudhry Chief Coordinator PCHR & Dr. Tauqir Shah ILO, and representatives of media and civil society participated in this workshop.

Member National Assembly Kashmala Tariq Executive Director Parliamentarian Commission for Human Rights (PCHR) said that Equal Employment opportunity law is need of the time to ensure economic empowerment of women particularly the working class. Talking about sexual harassment on working place she said that she presented a bill regarding sexual harassment in assembly but it was opposed by both genders yet main hindrance and opposition came from men because they felt insecure. She said in our society, women belonging to every class face sexual harassment at every level. She talked about Equal opportunities and equal wages for women on working places. She gave a suggestion to the forum that we should study the policies ,laws of other countries and the back ground of these laws so we could develop better understanding about different issues that how to resolve them, what kind of measures can be taken to solve these problems.

Begum Mehnaz Rafi, chairperson, NA Standing Committee for Women Development in her opening address, shared her recent efforts for welfare of home based workers. She said an Estimated 5 crore people are engaged in informal home based work and around 80 percent of them are women. Their living as well as working condition is the worst as compared to other workers in the formal sector. She told that major cause of exploitation of these home based workers is because of existing contractual system, where Thekaydar (contractor) enjoys the profit and the actual workers receive no benefit of their hard labour. She mentioned that earlier the labour inspector used to monitor the working conditions of labours in factories, but this practice is not longer there. Since they have no regulation, laws and policies, they earn the least, have no medical cover or other benefits. Issue of harassment should be addressed with proper legislation.

Shaheen Attiq-ur-Rehman MPA stated the world moves forward, values also change but this change is very slow. It is an evolutionary process and we can see that goals are moving forward. We need to keep fighting against discriminatory practices. More the women come forward, depleted the stigma would be. She criticized

the Jirga System and commented that such institutions are illegal and have no right to punish any one. We should discourage such institutions as working against the rights of women.

Dr. Syed Tauqir Hussain Shah, National Project Coordinator, ILO stated that there persists huge gap between market needs, employability and education in Pakistan. He mentioned, most of the top positions have been occupied by men and very few women in the management in the Federal Government, only 5.3 percent women are in top senior positions, while their share as officer is merely 20 percent. Same holds true for DMG and Central Civil service, where the presence of women is almost negligible.

Syed Talib Imam, MPA, Dr. Ishaq Baloch Central information secretary, Farheen Mughal, MPA, Shafique Chaudhry, Chief Coordinator, PCHR also highlighted serious issues regarding women employment concerns.

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