



**22<sup>nd</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council  
Item 6: Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Plenary on Pakistan**

**Oral Statement Delivered by Ms. Naumana Suleman on Behalf of  
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

**Thursday, 14 March 2013**

Thank you, Mr. President. FORUM-ASIA makes this statement with its member organisations in Pakistan: Bytes 4 All, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), Society for the Protection for the Rights of the Child (SPARC), and Potohar Organisation for Development Agency (PODA).<sup>1</sup> We regret that the government's positions on 165 recommendations were provided only at the last minute, without any substantive explanations (A/HRC/22/12/Add.1).

Mr. President, the government of Pakistan has taken initial measures towards implementing some selected recommendations from the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle, however much more is required for their meaningful impacts. For instance, we note Pakistan's ratification of ICCPR, ICESCR, CAT and CRPD in 2012, however no concrete timeline is available for the domestic measures to legislate these treaties. The government also outlined during the UPR Working Group session that it "had made efforts to create an enabling environment for the elimination of child labour", yet several steps are urgently required, particularly a legislation that bans child labour including in the informal sector. Meanwhile, we welcome the constitutional amendment entitled "The Right to Education" (Article 25-A) in May 2012 to provide free and compulsory education for children aged 5 to 16, however stress on its universal implementation.

Mr. President, we are apprehensive that the enabling legislation for the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) of May 2012 falls short of international standards. We urge the government to revisit section 15 of the Act to ensure that NCHR is mandated over the full law enforcement apparatus of the country, including intelligence agencies. We echo the call made by Qatar and Algeria to take speedy steps in establishing NCHR in accordance with the Paris Principles.

Mr. President, we share the alarm raised by a number of States on the discrimination, violence and persecution faced by religious minorities. We strongly urge the government of Pakistan to take on board recommendations to ensure immediate measures to end such practices, particularly those in the education system and public school curriculum. We also reiterate our call for the government to seriously address the violations of human rights perpetrated through the misuse of blasphemy laws.

Mr. President, we are disturbed that filtering technologies and digital surveillance tools are used to curtail the freedom of expression on the internet. The government must follow through with haste on its invitation to the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. Frank La Rue. Finally, we are distressed over the series of incidents attacking human rights defenders, aid workers and journalists in Pakistan and condemn the killing of seven workers of the NGO Ujala on 31 December 2012.<sup>2</sup> As highlighted by several States, the government of Pakistan must prioritize the adoption of a comprehensive legislation recognizing the rights of human rights defenders as well as the establishment of an adequate protection mechanism. Thank you, Mr. President.

<sup>1</sup> 14th Session of the UPR Working Group (22 October-5 November 2012), Submissions for the Stakeholder's Information; Bytes 4 All (Joint Submission 5); NCJP (Joint Submission 14); SPARC (Joint Submission 11), <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRPakistanStakeholderInfoS14.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> FORUM-ASIA Press Release, "Pakistan: Killing of Seven NGO Workers Condemned - Government Must Act Promptly to End Reoccurrence of Such Incidents", 4 January 2013, <http://www.forum-asia.org/?p=15715>