

**Statement by Pakistan during the Seventh Forum on Minority
Issues
(25-26 November 2014)**

Mr. Chairman,

Minorities have not only enriched the cultural and religious diversity of Pakistani society but have also immensely contributed to the development of the country. People belonging to minorities are equal citizens of the country and enjoy equal rights and protection under the law. The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights and status to all citizens, irrespective of religion, race, caste, colour or creed.

For the promotion and protection of rights of minorities, Pakistan has always pursued a policy of non-discrimination in line with the vision of its founding father, Quaid-E-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The Government has been taking administrative and policy measures to ensure that minorities enjoy equal rights for it strongly believes that without guaranteeing the rights of minorities, no society can foster culture of tolerance and mutual respect. Through various measures, the Government has always strived to establish an inclusive society in which people of various faiths can live in harmony, such as reservation of 10 seats for religious minorities in the National Assembly, 4 in the Senate and 23 in the Provincial Assemblies, establishment of National Commission for Minorities, official celebration of 10 religious festivals of minorities, celebration of 11 August as the National Day for Minorities, reservation of 5 percent quota in federal services, grant of scholarships for students from minority community, setting up of Interfaith Harmony Committees, among others.

As a country which is confronted with the menace of extremism and terrorism, people of Pakistan have faced formidable challenges in eradicating extremism and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and have rendered invaluable sacrifices. No country has suffered more than Pakistan from the direct and indirect consequences of terrorism. Terrorists have not only carried out barbaric attacks against minorities but have attacked mosques, the grave-sites of our spiritual elders, killed more than 45

thousand innocent men, women and children and attacked the very idea of culturally and religiously diverse peace-loving society.

Challenges notwithstanding people of Pakistan are committed to preserve their diverse society, fighting against extremist forces and protecting religious minorities. The recent heinous attacks perpetrated by terrorists against minorities have been regarded by every citizen of the country as an attack on themselves. In addition, an independent judiciary, vibrant civil society, vigilant citizenry, religious leaders and free and active media is assisting in countering the extremist narrative and fostering respect for religious diversity.

Mr. Chairman,

We take note with appreciation of recommendations drafted by the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues which cover a wide range of thematic issues. However, we express our serious concern at the inclusion of controversial notion of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in the draft recommendations for preventing atrocity crime-a crime neither defined nor recognized by existing international legal framework. The international community has witnessed that some powerful states have tried to execute notion of R2P in the name of protecting human rights and ending violations but have actually perpetuated such violence and extremism. Their collective intervention in the garb of R2P have resulted in instability and massive human rights violations which are the biggest threat to international peace and security. R2P can also be used as a license to interfere and bring about regime change. Therefore, we would like to reiterate that it is the primary responsibility of the state to protect rights of its citizens including minorities. In this regard, the international community should assist the member states through cooperation and constructive engagement in fulfilling their primary responsibility.

I thank you.