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8 March
INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY

23rd National Women Rights Conference 2025



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of the United Nations Registered Under Social Welfare Act 1961

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23rd ANNUAL NATIONAL WOMEN’S RIGHT DAY CONFERENCE
” For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment”

About the Conference

International Women’s Day (**March 8**) serves as a global platform to celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political contributions of women while reinforcing the imperative for accelerating gender equality. The International Human Rights Observer (IHRO) has remained steadfast in its commitment to advancing women’s rights at both national and international levels, commemorating this occasion annually with a focus on policy advocacy, social empowerment, and legislative reforms. In 2025, IHRO organized the 23rd National Women Rights Conference in Islamabad, Pakistan, convening government representatives, civil society organizations, United Nations agencies, and human rights advocates. This high-level forum facilitated comprehensive dialogue on the prevailing gender equality challenges in Pakistan, underscoring the need for collaborative action and policy-driven solutions to ensure equity, inclusion, and empowerment for all women and girls. The International Human Rights Observer (IHRO) holds Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and actively collaborates with governments, UN bodies, and international organizations to uphold and promote fundamental human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). IHRO’s mission is rooted in the pursuit of global peace, social justice, and sustainable development, ensuring that human rights remain at the core of national and international policy frameworks.



IHRO acknowledges the intrinsic link between human rights and sustainable development, integrating its initiatives with the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. This global framework, endorsed by **170 world leaders at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in 2015**, outlines **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 167 targets**, serving as a **strategic road map for inclusive growth, human rights protection, and gender equality**. The SDGs were established through the most inclusive and consultative process in the history of the United Nations, ensuring equitable representation of all nations and communities. Grounded in international human rights law, this framework presents a critical opportunity to drive systemic change and eliminate discrimination in all forms.

As an ECO-SOC-accredited organization, IHRO-Pakistan actively participates in global human rights dialogues, policy forums, and advocacy initiatives, particularly those focusing on gender equality, social justice, and women’s empowerment. Through flagship events such as the 23rd National Women Rights Conference, IHRO reaffirms its commitment to fostering legal, economic, and social frameworks that promote equity, opportunity, and fundamental rights for women in Pakistan and beyond.

23rd National Women’s Rights Day Conference: For ALL Women and Girls – Rights, Equality, Empowerment

The 2025 theme for International Women’s Day, set by the United Nations, is “For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.” This theme highlights the importance of ensuring equal opportunities, legal protections, and empowerment for women and girls worldwide. The focus of this year’s theme is to accelerate progress towards gender equality by addressing socioeconomic disparities, legal barriers, and structural inequalities. It aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly:

- **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- **Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

The theme also builds upon the commitments made under **UN Women’s gender equality initiatives** and reinforces **existing commitments** to women’s empowerment and human rights.

Key Targets of the 2030 Agenda for Women’s Rights

- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes (Goal 4).
- By 2030, guarantee that all children have access to quality early childhood development, care, and primarily education to prepare them for school.
- End all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere. Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in both public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- Eradicate harmful practices such as child marriages, forced marriages, and female genital mutilation (FGM).

As a UN ECOSOC member organization, International Human Rights Observer (IHRO) is fully committed to achieving the objectives of SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). To support this mission, IHRO organized the 23rd National Women’s Rights Day Conference under its theme:

“For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.”

The purpose of the conference was to:

- Share practical solutions to promote and protect women’s rights.
- Discuss strategies for the implementation of SDGs related to gender equality.
- Encourage new legislation and strengthen the effective enforcement of existing laws on women’s rights in Pakistan.
- Foster collaboration among government agencies, international organizations, and civil society to advance gender equality.

Through this conference, IHRO reaffirmed its dedication to ensuring that women’s rights remain a national priority, advocating for legal, educational, and social reforms that empower women and girls in Pakistan.

REPORT

23rd NATIONAL WOMEN RIGHTS CONFERENCE

The International Human Rights Observer (IHRO) organized a one-day National Conference on Women's Rights on International Women's Day 2025 at the National Library of Pakistan, Islamabad, on March 8th, 2025. The main theme of the event was "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment." To enhance awareness and provide literature, various documents, including the UN Secretary-General's message, the UN Women Executive Director's message, and the 2025 theme for International Women's Day, were distributed among the participants.

The event was attended by people from all sectors, including social activists, civil society members, lawmakers, journalists, academia, students, and media representatives. The session was graced by distinguished speakers and guests from national and international organizations. Key attendees included:

- **Dr. Khalid Aftab Sulehri**, Chairman, IHRO
- **Mr. Rana Ghulam Mustafa**, Secretary, National Commission for Human Rights Pakistan
- **Ms. Afshan Tahseen**, Former Chairperson, Child Rights Commission of Pakistan
- **Mr. Arif Kareem**, Secretary, Federal Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment
- **Dr. Peer Sayed Muhammad Raza Ali Bukhari**, Chairman, Raza International University
- **Dr. Maria Catalina Alliente**, Principal, Universal College Islamabad
- **Ms. Abia Akram**, CEO, National Forum for Women with Disabilities
- **Prof. Dr. Noor Yasmeen Rahoojo**, HOD, National University of Modern Languages
- Ms. Fariha Sajid (National Skill University),
- **Ms. Ayesha Sohail** (Research Associate),
- **Dr. Farhat Mehmood** (Pakistan Institute of Development Economics),
- **Ms. Romana Bashir** (Executive, Peace and Development Foundation),
- **Prof. Dr. Joharia Azhar** (CEO, Pathodont Polyclinics and Academy),
- **Dr. Sadaf Asim Abbasi** (Vice President, Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries),
- **Ms. Syeda Firdous** (Senior Politician and Social Worker), and Lion Sibtain Raza Lodhi (Lions Club Islamabad).

The conference commenced with the recitation from the Holy Quran by Dr. Khalid Aftab Sulehri, President & Executive Director of IHRO and Chief Coordinator of the Conference. The

UN Secretary-General's message for International Women's Day was read by Ms. Ayesha Sohail, followed by the UN Women Executive Director's message, read by Ms. Romana Bashir. The theme for International Women's Day 2025, "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment." was presented by Dr. Sadaf Asim Abbasi.

The conference provided a platform for discussion on key gender equality challenges in Pakistan and led to important resolutions focusing on policy reforms, legal protections, and gender empowerment strategies. The participants unanimously agreed on the need for stronger institutional mechanisms, international collaboration, and policy actions to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and girls in Pakistan.

Key Highlights from the Conference

Ms. Afshan Tahseen, Former Chairperson, Child Rights Commission of Pakistan, emphasized the importance of children's and women's rights in shaping a progressive society. She highlighted the ongoing struggles of women and children in Pakistan and urged government institutions to strengthen legal frameworks that ensure gender equality and child protection. She also pointed out the lack of proper implementation of laws related to child rights and called for a national strategy to address issues such as child marriages, domestic violence, and educational disparities.



Mr. Rana Ghulam Mustafa, Secretary, National Commission for Human Rights Pakistan, addressed the gathering on the legal aspects of women's rights and their enforcement in Pakistan. He emphasized the role of NCHR in advocating for gender equality and assured that the commission is actively working to eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence. He further elaborated on the importance of judicial reforms to ensure timely justice for women victims of violence.

Dr. Khalid Aftab Sulehri, Chairman, International Human Rights Observer, reaffirmed IHRO's commitment to advancing women's rights as part of its role within the UN ECOSOC. He stressed that ensuring women's dignity and equal opportunities is crucial for national progress. He also presented the conference declaration, which was unanimously approved by the participants. He called for the **formation of a Women Rights Federation of Pakistan**, a national-level advocacy body dedicated to protecting and promoting gender equality.



Mr. Arif Kareem, Secretary, Federal Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment, focused on workplace harassment issues faced by

women. He elaborated on the legal mechanisms available for women to seek justice and encouraged institutions to create safer and more inclusive work environments. He highlighted cases where workplace harassment complaints were mishandled due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and called for **streamlining the legal complaint process**.



Dr. Peer Sayed Muhammad Raza Ali Bukhari, Ex-MLA and Chairman, Raza International University, discussed the role of education in empowering women. He highlighted the importance of providing equal access to quality education and skill development programs for women to ensure their socio-economic upliftment. He also urged **educational institutions to incorporate gender studies programs** to create awareness among students about gender-based inequalities.

Mr. James Cyprian, Vice Chairman, Christian Association USA and Senior Vice President, PPP Party USA, spoke about the role of religious and political institutions in supporting gender equality. He emphasized interfaith harmony and the need for collective efforts from all sectors to protect women's rights. He also pointed out that **gender equality should not be politicized** but treated as a fundamental human right that requires national and international cooperation.



Mr. Abdul Hameed Lone, Senior Kashmiri Leader, condemned the violations of women's rights in Indian-occupied Kashmir. He highlighted the suffering of Kashmiri women due to ongoing conflict and urged international organizations to intervene and support their cause. He described instances of **forced disappearances, violence, and oppression** of Kashmiri women and called for **global attention on the humanitarian crisis in the region**.

Prof. Dr. Maqsood Jafri, a renowned scholar and poet, emphasized the philosophical and ethical perspectives of gender equality. He encouraged society to break cultural and social barriers that restrict women's participation in leadership roles. He also recited **poetry celebrating the strength and resilience of women**, which was well-received by the audience.



Dr. Tahira Sadique, Director, Food Security Islamabad, focused on the importance of food security and nutrition for women and children. She

urged the government to implement policies that ensure women's access to adequate food and healthcare. She pointed out the **disproportionate impact of climate change on women's food security** and emphasized the need for gender-responsive policies in the agricultural sector.

Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (SSP), Islamabad Police, spoke about the role of law enforcement in protecting women's rights. He reassured that the Islamabad Police are committed to eliminating violence against women and ensuring their safety in public and private spaces. He discussed recent police initiatives for women's protection, including women-only helplines and self-defense training programs.



Dr. Maria Catalina Alliente, Principal, Universal College Islamabad, emphasized the importance of educational institutions in promoting gender equality. She encouraged universities and colleges to implement policies that create an inclusive and supportive environment for women. She also advocated for **increasing scholarships and mentorship programs for women in higher education**.

Ms. Abia Akram, CEO, National Forum for Women with Disabilities, highlighted the challenges faced by women with disabilities in Pakistan. She urged policymakers to introduce inclusive legislation that ensures equal opportunities and accessibility for all women. She also discussed the **importance of assistive technologies and infrastructure** to support women with disabilities in education and employment.



Prof. Dr. Noor Yasmeen Rahoojo, HOD, National University of Modern Languages, discussed the significance of higher education in empowering women. She emphasized the need for more women in academia and leadership roles within educational institutions. She proposed **establishing gender equality centers in universities** to provide research and policy recommendations on women's issues.

Ms. Romana Bashir, Executive at the Peace and Development Foundation, addressed the impact of conflict and discrimination on women's rights. She spoke about the importance of strengthening policies to combat gender-based violence and ensuring access to



justice for survivors. She also encouraged interfaith dialogue and community engagement to create more inclusive society for women.

Prof. Dr. Joharia Azhar, CEO of Pathodont Polyclinics and Academy, highlighted the challenges faced by women in the healthcare sector. She spoke about the need for improved workplace policies, fair wages, and leadership opportunities for female healthcare professionals. She also emphasized the importance of women's health awareness campaigns to ensure better access to medical services.



Dr. Sadaf Asim Abbasi, Vice President of the Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries, discussed women's role in entrepreneurship and economic growth. She encouraged business mentorship programs and policy reforms to support women-led businesses. She also urged financial institutions to offer better access to credit and investment opportunities for female entrepreneurs.

Ms. Syeda Firdous, a Senior Politician and Social Worker, emphasized the importance of women's participation in politics. She called for increased representation of women in decision-making roles at all levels. She also spoke about the barriers women face in entering politics and urged political parties to adopt gender-inclusive policies.



Lion Sibtain Raza Lodhi, from Lions Club Islamabad, spoke about community service initiatives for women's empowerment. He highlighted various programs launched by the Lions Club to support education, healthcare, and skill development for women. He encouraged more public-private partnerships to strengthen gender equality efforts.

The **conference concluded with a strong commitment** from all stakeholders to continue advocating for women's rights and working towards a more equitable society. More than **200 participants** took part in this significant annual event.

The **23rd National Women Rights Conference** successfully brought together **government officials, civil society, and international organizations** to **address critical gender issues**. The conference emphasized **legal reforms, social awareness, and international cooperation** to **enhance women's rights in Pakistan**. Moving forward, **IHRO will continue its advocacy**

efforts to ensure the implementation of conference resolutions and work towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

Pictures of Conference





Pictures of Award Ceremony



DECLARATION

23rd NATIONAL WOMEN RIGHTS CONFERENCE

Islamabad – March 8, 2025

The **International Human Rights Observer (IHRO)**, in collaboration with various civil society organizations, political and religious parties, diplomats, human rights experts, and intellectuals from across Pakistan, organized the **23rd National Women Rights Conference** to commemorate **International Women’s Day 2025**. The conference participants deliberated on various issues related to women's rights and empowerment, leading to the adoption of the following **recommendations**:

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This conference condemns all forms of violence against women in Pakistan and urges the government to take immediate and effective measures to protect women from domestic violence, workplace harassment, and gender-based violence in all forms.
2. The conference fully endorses the United Nations theme for International Women’s Day 2025, “For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.” and supports global initiatives for gender equality and women’s empowerment.
3. The conference appreciates the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda 2030 and recognizes its significance for sustainable development and human rights. The conference urges the effective implementation of SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and SDG 4 (Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning) at the governmental level.
4. This conference calls upon the government to uphold international commitments and constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights by amending all discriminatory laws against women in the Penal Code, Family Laws, and Evidence Act. It also urges the full implementation of laws related to the protection of women’s rights, including domestic violence laws and workplace harassment regulations.
5. The Parliament should prioritize the passage and effective implementation of key legislation, including the Anti-Rape Laws, Anti-Honor Killing Laws, and laws against domestic violence and gender discrimination.
6. The national election laws should establish a quota of directly elected National Assembly seats for women, in addition to the existing reserved seats. Furthermore, the Parliament should ensure that a significant number of key parliamentary committees are chaired by women to enhance their role in policy-making.
7. The provincial governments should strengthen the Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women (PCSW) by providing them with adequate resources and authority to monitor violations of women’s rights and ensure gender-sensitive policies and legislation.
8. The conference appreciates the establishment of the National Commission for Human Rights and calls for the development of a National Human Rights Policy to complement the existing National Plan of Action on Human Rights.

9. This conference urges the Government of Pakistan to fully implement international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), to guarantee basic rights and freedoms in the country.
10. The government must ensure the safety and security of women human rights defenders, female journalists, and activists, who are at increasing risk due to their advocacy for gender equality.
11. The conference calls for equal rights and opportunities for women from minority communities and urges the government to implement policies that protect and empower them in all sectors of society.
12. The conference encourages all individuals and organizations to support women's rights initiatives and urges civil society to actively work towards gender equality and women's empowerment. It calls upon the public, media, and community leaders to promote a culture of respect, dignity, and justice for all women in Pakistan.

The **23rd National Women Rights Conference concluded with a strong commitment** from all stakeholders to continue **advocating for women's rights and promoting legislative, social, and economic reforms**. Participants reaffirmed their **dedication to ensuring gender equality, eliminating discrimination, and building a more inclusive society for all women and girls**.

Conclusion and Way Forward

The 23rd National Women Rights Conference successfully brought together government officials, civil society, and international organizations to address critical gender issues. The conference emphasized legal reforms, social awareness, and international cooperation to enhance women's rights in Pakistan. Moving forward, IHRO will continue its advocacy efforts to ensure the implementation of conference resolutions and work towards a more inclusive and equitable society.