

**Statement by the American Pakistan Foundation**

***Submitted at the United Nations Commission on Status of Women 62***

***on March 12 - 23, 2018***

As the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development rekindles the world with hope of accelerating the empowerment of women and girls, in accordance with the sixty-second session at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the priority theme “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls” carries significant meaning for Pakistan civil society. Family Education Services Foundation (FESF) and American Pakistan Foundation (APF) recognize that this past year has witnessed progress Pakistan due to the accelerated economic promise and growth due to -China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as civil society and government have worked together in partnerships.

We call on member states to recognize the urgency of addressing challenges of rural women and girls and develop concrete plans to ensure that rural women become critical agents for the enhancement of agricultural and rural development and food security and nutrition, as outlined in outcome documents of major global conferences (International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the third United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (A/RES/66/288), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for the third International Conference on Financing for Development (A/RES/69/313) and the Istanbul Programme for Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (A/CONF.219/3).

According to global estimates, although the world’s major urban centres continue to grow exponentially, forty-six percent of the population is still rural, with sixty-one percent of Pakistan’s population still rural. Rural areas continue to struggle with slow or stagnant economic growth, unstable food prices and demand, extreme weather events, and violent conflicts, lack of access to resources, limited participation and lack of decision making in social, political and economic areas of women and girls.

We urge member states to address challenges of rural women by recognizing the need to invest in capacity building which will allow them to actively participate in the formulation of inclusive economic and development policies. Providing space for women to engage effectively and shape micro-level policy will result in direct access to

economic opportunities and resources, participation in leadership and politics, access to sexual and reproductive rights, and much more.

Similarly, we urge member states to redefine the macro-economic policies in areas such as health, education and agriculture and to close the gap of impact which traditionally is reserved for women and girls.

As the global marketplace demands knowledge and skill of information technologies (ICTs), we urge member states to address the need for resources and funding for ICTs in the rural areas and for the access to the use of media and new technologies.

We urge member states to promote inclusive girls' education by integrating access and knowledge to ICTs, curricula development and teacher training at all educational levels.

We urge member states to expand skill training, vocational and employment training and capacity building programmes for women and girls, especially for those traditionally excluded from mainstream society.

In 2017, Pakistan witnessed private commitment of corporations to ensure gender inclusion in the workforce, training and decision making<sup>1</sup>. In the continued spirit, we call on member state Pakistan to continue to strengthen partnerships with stakeholders in areas of private sector, academia and civil society.

Family Education Services Foundation (FESF) with America Pakistan Foundation (APF), our UN collaborative partner, urge Pakistan and other UN member states to continue their leadership role in further implementation of gender based policies that encourage and support women's empowerment, especially in rural areas, and their link to sustainable development.

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<sup>1</sup> PepsiCo Pakistan and Nestle Pakistan commit to gender equality, <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2017/08/multinational-companies-in-pakistan-lead-by-example>