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President: Mr. Kapambwe (Zambia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Annual ministerial review: Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education

National voluntary presentation: Pakistan

1. **The President** invited Ms. Bellamy (Chair of the Board of Directors of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative) to act as moderator for the national voluntary presentation.

2. **Ms. Shah** (Pakistan), Member of the National Assembly and Chairperson of the National Commission for Human Development, said that her Government had prepared an honest report on the actual situation of education in her country, detailing the achievements and the many challenges ahead. Despite the shortcomings, the outlook was encouraging as her Government was deeply committed to improving education to meet the expectations both of its own people and the international community.

3. Turning to key education indicators, she said that Pakistan had an adult literacy rate of 57.7 per cent, a net primary school enrolment rate of 57 per cent and a gross primary school enrolment rate of 91 per cent. There were 156,000 primary schools, with 17.2 million enrolled pupils and 440,000 teachers; 41,000 middle schools, with 6.3 million enrolled pupils and 330,000 teachers; and 24,000 secondary schools, with 2.5 million enrolled pupils and 380,000 teachers. Pakistan was committed to achieving Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2: it had undertaken to achieve universal primary education and gender equality in education, and to increase literacy to 85 per cent by 2015.

4. Pakistan was facing multiple challenges. The devastating earthquake in northern Pakistan in 2005 had caused over 70,000 casualties, including 17,000 schoolchildren, and had left 4 million homeless and more than 7,500 school buildings damaged or destroyed. The disastrous floods in 2010 had caused 2,000 casualties, displaced 20 million persons and submerged 2.6 million acres of crops. More than 6 million children had been affected by the floods and over 10,000 school buildings had been damaged or destroyed.

5. Another challenge was the long-standing regional war and terrorism. Terrorism struck at the heart of social infrastructure, with terrorists specifically targeting

schools. Some 700 girls' schools had been damaged or destroyed by the Taliban.

6. Internal displacement was a key problem. It disrupted daily life for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the host communities. IDPs were often housed in schools, which disrupted education for local children. On the departure of IDPs, the buildings were sometimes left in a dire state. The overall situation in Pakistan was best described in terms of "the emergency of everyday life".

7. The economic cost and attendant socio-economic challenges of natural disasters, war and terrorism were also considerable. According to the most recent estimates, 40 per cent of the population lived in poverty. In the face of the economic meltdown, child labour was on the rise. Acute energy shortages exacerbated the economic slowdown and further contributed to poverty. The school drop-out rate stood at 40 per cent, 60 per cent of schools had no electricity and 34 per cent no drinking water. Most primary schools in rural areas had only two teachers, 65 per cent of public primary schools had only two rooms for six classes, and the quality of education was poor.

8. Access to free and compulsory secondary education was guaranteed by the Constitution. In 2010, a new article 25-A had been added that provided for free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 5 and 16. The National Education Policy adopted in 2009 (the "Policy") stipulated increased enrolment in public sector schools, higher budget allocations for education, the removal of urban-rural and gender imbalances, and better quality education at all levels. The Policy comprised 20 objectives and 11 key policy actions. Objective 13 aligned national objectives with international commitments within the Dakar Framework for Action, the Education for All (EFA) goals and the education-related MDGs. Policy action 1 provided for the allocation of 7 per cent of GDP to education by 2015, although current resource commitments to education fell short of that target.

9. Two major achievements over the past decade were the abolition of school fees for primary and secondary education and the provision of free textbooks to all students in public-sector schools up to secondary level. As a result, the direct cost of education had been reduced and school enrolment rates had increased.

10. The Government recognized the need for private and private-public initiatives in education. Given the tremendous challenges, it was important to get all stakeholders on board. Several private-public institutions had been established, including the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) and provincial national education foundations. The Sindh Education Foundation, for example, provided subsidies for school enrolment and NCHD implemented an adult literacy programme that had offered basic literacy training to 3.5 million women since 2003. Literacy initiatives had also benefited from support at the provincial level.

11. Gender parity had advanced steadily, and Pakistan's 2010 medium-term development target had been achieved. There were good prospects also for achieving the MDG target for primary, secondary and youth literacy levels by 2015. Stipends for girls had been instrumental in that regard, increasing girls' enrolment by up to 60 per cent.

12. Early childhood education had also been integrated into the National Education Policy, and nearly 2.2 million children were currently enrolled. A curriculum had been developed, but remained to be formalized. Teacher training initiatives were also under way.

13. There was growing demand for education nationwide, but thousands of villages had no schools. Poverty was the main barrier to education, and free education and incentives could increase enrolment of girls. Public-private partnerships could help expand access and improve quality, subject to effective regulation and monitoring. However, universal primary education could only be achieved through focused public sector intervention, for which additional financial resources were required. The private sector, which currently catered to 30 per cent of children, was an important partner, but the quality of education in low-income private schools was often poor. Improving the efficiency of existing schools should be given priority over building new schools.

14. With regard to emerging challenges and opportunities, the recent constitutional amendment had made the provinces fully responsible for the implementation of primary and secondary education. Coordination could pose a problem in future and implementation of the reforms called for extra financial resources. Pakistan received extensive support from donors, but additional funds — for education sector reform, education in disaster areas and the Pakistan

Education Task Force, for example — were highly desirable.

15. With regard to international commitments, Pakistan was not likely to achieve all the EFA goals and education-related MDGs. Policy commitment was strong, but implementation was comparatively weak. Following the devolution of powers to provincial governments, success in taking the education agenda forward would depend on: a well-designed investment programme for improved education infrastructure and trained staff; effective governance through regular supervision and monitoring; expansion of non-formal education and literacy initiatives; support from the private sector and NGOs; strong community participation; innovation and technical education to develop a modern workforce; guaranteed access to mandatory education; donor coordination and sustained support in line with national priorities.

16. **Mr. Rahman** (Bangladesh), reviewer, welcomed the progress that Pakistan had made, in spite of the domestic and international challenges facing it, towards fulfilment of its Education for All targets and the Millennium Development Goals. Pakistan's national voluntary presentation highlighted the difficulties that countries in the South Asia region — an area in which much of the world's population and many of the world's problems were concentrated — had in meeting their development objectives. Pakistan's presentation also drew attention to the gap between available resources and what was actually needed, as well as setting out clearly how the international community could help to improve the situation.

17. He asked what policy measures had contributed to Pakistan's success in increasing the number of girls attending school. He also wished to know what steps had been taken to adapt the country's education system to the needs of the global market.

18. **Mr. Qian Bo** (China), reviewer, observed that, in spite of the difficulties caused by massive floods in 2010 and a fall in GDP growth from 6.8 per cent in 2008 to 2.4 per cent in 2010, Pakistan had succeeded in maintaining stable levels of school attendance and lifting the literacy rate from 55 per cent to 57 per cent. Gender inequality in education had been reduced. However, the school dropout rate, adult illiteracy, poor infrastructure and a lack of funding for education were still cause for concern. China pledged to strengthen cooperation with Pakistan and appealed to the

international community to provide all the necessary assistance.

19. He asked what steps had been taken to ensure equality of education opportunities for members of ethnic minorities and disabled people in Pakistan, and how the implementation of education policy was coordinated across the country, given that responsibility for education had been transferred to the provinces.

20. **Ms. Ormanci** (Turkey), reviewer, welcomed the policy reforms introduced by Pakistan in an effort to meet its international commitments within the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All targets and MDGs. Those policies, however, had to be put into practice. Gender equality should also become an integral part of Pakistan's national education policy.

21. Pakistan was to be commended for its efforts to overcome challenges arising from such factors as natural disasters, structural weaknesses, economic crises and political instability. The country's efforts in education required continued, coherent and coordinated support from its international development partners.

22. She asked what policy steps had been undertaken to provide quality education in Pakistan and, more generally, how international development partners could contribute to education in developing countries that were burdened with unsustainable debt.

23. **Ms. Shah** (Pakistan) said that girls outnumbered boys in some areas of higher education and that, on average, they achieved better results at the tertiary level. The issue was getting girls into school in the first place. In addition to donor-funded initiatives, a national programme provided stipends to encourage girls to proceed to secondary education. Donor-funded and local food programmes helped to keep girls in school and the adult literacy programme run by the National Commission for Human Development was aimed largely at women. Overall, the education situation of women was improving gradually. Pakistan had also launched one of the largest cash-transfer programmes in South Asia and most of the funds went in direct income support to around 5 million women, who it was thought would spend it on families and food.

24. About 60 per cent of the population was under 30 years of age. Young people needed market-oriented education and numerous public- and private-sector technical education initiatives and apprenticeship programmes at the provincial and national levels were

aimed at them. Nevertheless, an overarching regulatory and systemic framework for those initiatives was still missing.

25. The provision of quality education was a challenge. Comprehensive teacher-training programmes and resource centres were in place, more centres for teacher education were being established around the country and plans were under way to open a teacher-training university.

26. Under the Constitution, minorities enjoyed equal rights but special scholarships were also available to them. There were branches of the national institute for the disabled in every district of the country, along with offices that dealt with child labour.

27. Initial reports indicated that education spending by the provinces had risen significantly, to as much as 10-15 per cent of their budgets, since they had been handed responsibility for education. The Inter-Provincial Coordination Committee would be responsible for coordinating policy across the provinces.

28. As an expression of the country's commitment to achieving its MDGs, Parliament had recently decided to form an all-party select committee for MDGs, whose sole remit would be to monitor progress in that regard.

29. Turning to Pakistan's national debt, she said that two countries were supporting Pakistan by replacing debt with education initiatives. A key teacher-training programme, a computer-technology training plan for rural institutes and scholarships for pre-service teacher training were all debt swap projects. More such arrangements to replace debt would be welcome, but they should not come at the expense of official development assistance (ODA).

30. **Mr. Sahay** (India) asked whether there was a contradiction between the decision to devolve responsibility for primary and secondary education to the provinces and the inclusion in the Constitution of article 25-A on the State's responsibility for providing free and compulsory education. Surely devolution placed limits on the capacity of the national Government to legislate effectively on education. If that was the case, how could article 25-A be implemented?

31. Had Pakistan adopted any innovative budgetary measures, such as India's education cess, which was applied to all taxes and yielded approximately US\$ 3.5 billion a year that was set aside wholly for primary education?

32. **Ms. Kotter** (Germany) asked what lessons had been learned in Pakistan about the provision of education in the aftermath of natural disasters. What had been the effect of converting schools into temporary shelters for flood victims?

33. **Ms. Shah** (Pakistan) said that there had been considerable duplication and wastage in the area of education over the years. Streamlining through devolution was thus an important step. The significance of article 25-A lay in the provision of a constitutional guarantee of the right to education, which in turn gave civil society a tool with which to exercise direct public pressure on government to implement education policy. In areas of the country administered directly by the central Government, legislation based on article 25-A had been drafted and would soon be enacted. Laws on compulsory primary education in the provinces needed to be strengthened and article 25-A would therefore be replicated at a provincial level.

34. Pakistan spent a little more than 2 per cent of GDP on education and thus lagged well behind the target of 7 per cent of the budget that it had set for 2015. The Government was trying to maximize available resources for education in the public and private sectors, as it was clear that it would be impossible to put article 25-A into practice without adequate resources.

35. The conversion of some schools into temporary shelters in the aftermath of the 2010 floods had admittedly disrupted regular schooling, but had also enabled some of the country's poorest and illiterate people, who had been displaced by the floods, to receive their first taste of basic education in the transitional schooling and literacy centres that had been set up in those shelters. A cause of concern had been whether they would continue schooling upon returning home but some, especially women and children, had shown a willingness to do so.

The meeting was suspended at 10.55 a.m. and resumed at 11.05 a.m.

**Special panel discussion of the high-level segment on:
“Promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable growth
for accelerating poverty eradication and achievement
of the Millennium Development Goals”**

36. *A special panel discussion followed on the topic “Promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable growth*

for accelerating poverty eradication and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals”. The panel was chaired by the President, who made an introductory statement, and moderated by Mr. Juan Somavía, Director-General of the International Labour Organization, who made introductory remarks and introduced the panellists: Mr. Min Zhu (Special Advisor to the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund); Ms. Noeleen Heyzer (Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific); Mr. Cho Tae-yul (Ambassador for Development Cooperation of the Republic of Korea); Ms. Frances Stewart (Director of the Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, University of Oxford) and Ms. Esther Duflo (Abdul Latif Jameel Professor of Poverty Alleviation and Development Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology).

37. *The panellists made presentations and engaged in an interactive discussion, in which the delegations of India, Greece, Guatemala, the United States of America, Zambia and Senegal, and a representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, participated. The delegation of Indonesia, on behalf of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam, made a statement. The moderator made concluding remarks and closed the panel discussion.*

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.