

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON STATUS OF WOMEN

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Advocacy Through
media campaign

Women parliamentarians' convention

consultation on
compliance with
sexual Harassment
act

Inauguration of Re-
source Centre

Briefing to Ms. Yas-
mine Rehman, Advi-
sor to PM on Women
Development

monitoring committee
to comply with sexual
harassment act

Roundtable on dis-
criminatory policies

40th Meeting of
NCSW

Handling of cases of
Voilance against
womenVAW cases

Consultation on home
Nominations for peace
prizes

Briefing/Press Confer-
ence on rising violence
against women

Press releases

SAUT-E-NISWAN

The voice of women

VOLUME 02 ISSUE 3RD

APRIL—JUNE 2010



It gives me great pleasure to share with you the main activities, events and achievements of the National Commission on the Status of Women between the periods April to June 2010.

It was decided that in addition to supporting legislation against domestic violence and other laws to strengthen women's rights, the Commission would undertake a comprehensive review of existing laws and policies in order to identify weaknesses and areas that needed to be strengthened. The review findings and recommendations by legal and policy experts will be presented to policy makers after consultation with concerned government representatives and members of civil society.

An important development during this quarter was the setting up of our Resource Centre. Located in the NCSW office the Resource Centre attempts to establish a central database from where all research and information on

women can be easily accessed. The Commission was joined by three new members: Justice (Retd.) Kailash Nath Kohli and Ms. Roshan Barucha from Baluchistan and Ms. Mohammadi Khalid Khan Umerzai from Khyber Pakhtunk-

mandate.

Throughout this period the unabated incidents of violence against women and the impunity granted to perpetrators remained an area of serious concern. The



hwa. Much time and effort were expended in trying to obtain administrative and financial autonomy for the Commission so that it can be on an equal footing with similar women's commissions around the world and function as an effective body as defined in its

Commission is of the view that unless the law is allowed to take due action against perpetrators of violence without interference from influential persons, the rights of women and other vulnerable groups will continue to be violated.

Advocacy/Awareness Media Campaign

The NCSW plans to launch a media campaign on violence against women at home and at the work place. To begin with, it will run public services messages on the Women's Protection Bill and Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2010, targeting the general public and women in general to create maximum awareness about the law and its implementation. Public service messages have been prepared and sent for production of spots.

Once production is complete, the campaign will be aired on state owned and private TV channels. At the second stage, the Commission will launch a campaign based on the recommendations that emerged from the research studies that NCSW commissioned in four areas i.e. Women's Participation in the Political Process, Local Government, Education and Health. Recommendations relate to en-

suring women's vote, stopping the crime of acid burning, and stopping domestic violence against women. The production scripts on all three issues have been prepared and the production of spots is in process. The messages will be run on different TV channels during the month of August.

Women's Parliamentarians' Convention

At the National Convention of Women Parliamentarians on *"The role of women parliamentarians in peace building and reconciliation"* held on May 25-26, 2010, NCSW Chairperson Ms. Anis Haroon made a presentation on the topic "Women in Conflicts and Peace Building." In her comprehensive presentation, she highlighted the consequences of wars and conflicts on the lives of women and children. She said, war and civil unrest have the effect of intensifying violence against women in the home, and when conflicts end they are left to cope

with the after affects and take care of extended families. Women are good at creating and sustaining peace, but unfortunately they are never included in any peace restoring initiatives or negotiations. She urged women parliamentarians to promote women's full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security. Ms. Anis Haroon stressed that the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 must be implemented in letter and spirit, because it acknowledges the crucial link between peace and women's participation in decision-making, and recognizes women's life experiences throughout the conflict cycle.

Roundtable Consultation on Compliance of sexual Harassment act

To ensure implementation of the Women's Protection Act and the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2010, the National Commission on the Status of Women organized a round table consultation with key stakeholders on **"Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010"** on 22nd April.

The aim of this consultation was to assess the current implementation status of this law; to obtain information from representatives of public and private sector organizations regarding the initiatives taken by them to implement this law within their respective departments and organizations; and to learn about difficulties and constraints that stand in the way of full compliance. This event provided an opportunity for all participants to enhance their learning and under-



standing about the Act. Decision makers in the media were also invited to help promote awareness in the public about the new law and its working dynamics. The Code of Conduct prepared by the NGO network AASHA was shared and questions regarding its application answered. Representatives from Ministry of Information undertook to translate the Code, which is available in Urdu and English, into the different provincial languages.

The roundtable consultation was largely attended by representatives of the Government, different ministries, divisions, departments, autonomous and semi autonomous bodies, chambers of commerce and industry, major public sector organizations, media and members of civil society.

Inauguration of Resource Center



Inauguration by Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister

NCSW's Resource Centre was inaugurated by Ms Shehnaz Wazir Ali, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for the Social Sector, at a very colorful event in the NCSW office in Islamabad. Speaking on the occasion Ms Wazir Ali said that empowerment is about opportunities and access, and the Resource Centre is the first step towards empowerment of women. She said that the Centre will not only serve as a hub of information on women and gender issues, but will connect researchers with the latest developments on the status of women worldwide, especially in Muslim countries.

ADB Country Director, Rune Stroem, termed the centre as a

milestone initiative to open up a new world of information on women's issues, and said that it would be a strong contribution in further increasing the role of women in social and economic affairs of Pakistan.

Chairperson NCSW said that the Resource center has been established to cater to the urgent need of researchers, academia, politicians, lawyers, judiciary, media, and civil society organizations and is easily accessible to all, digitally and manually. At a later stage the Resource Center will be linked to District Resource Centers established under Ministry of Women Development in the districts. This will enable women and men at the local level to directly access

the information they need. It will contribute to disseminating information and raising awareness about policies, laws and human rights and serve as a comprehensive database at the national level.

The Resource Center will help to co-ordinate the efforts of different sections of society, including civil society organizations, academia and the government to guide gender related initiatives and improve women's lives. The Resource Center will be a hub of information on women related issues, policies, Bills, Ordinances, Acts and laws, and publications will be conveniently available in hard copies or electronically.

Country representative ADB Rune Stroem, Chairperson NCSW Anis Haroon, members of the NCSW, representatives from civil society, the media, national /international organizations, and academia were present at the occasion. The Resource Center has been established with support from the Asian Development Bank.

Empowerment is about opportunities and access

(Ms Shehnaz Wazir Ali, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister)

Establishment of Implementation Watch Committee to monitor compliance of Sexual Harassment Act

The NCSW is required by its mandate to monitor laws that are made to support women's human rights, and to recommend laws and policies to eliminate discrimination against women.

In order to ensure that the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010 is implemented in letter and spirit, NCSW constituted a committee to facilitate, monitor and oversee the implementation process of the Act in the country. The committee will

consist of representatives from Government departments, the private sector, civil society and media etc. The term of the committee will be for two years during which time it will work with active players and regulatory bodies to ensure that the law is complied with.

The objectives of Implementation Watch Committee are to:

1. Mobilize support from higher Government offices to intervene and expedite the implementation process
2. Ensure coordination between all stakeholders, government organizations, private sector, donor partners, civil society, working women and media, with the aim of collecting information and developing linkages
3. Oversee and monitor initiatives to ensure full compliance with Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010
4. Engage with relevant government departments to oversee developing of rules for the Act and setting up of the office of Ombudsperson.

The NCSW appointed the following as members of this Committee.

- 1) Dr. Fouzia Saeed (chairperson) Member NCSW

Government Officials

- 2) Representative of the Prime Minister's Secretariat
- 3) Representative of Ministry of Women's Development
- 4) Representative of Establishment Division
- 5) Representative of Auditor General
- 6) Representative of National Commission on the Status of Women
- 7) Representative of Federal Board of Revenue
- 8) Representative of National Police Bureau

Civil Society

- 9) I. A. Rehman, Exec. Director, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)
- 10) Mohammad Tehsin, Exec. Director, South Asia Partnership Pakistan (SAP PK)
- 11) Aqsa Khan, Director, Women's Organization for Rights and Development (WORD), member AASHA
- 12) Mohammad Waseem, Exec. Director, Interactive Resource Center (IRC), member AASHA
- 13) Maliha Husain, Program Director, Mehergarh: Center for Learning, AASHA secretariat
- 14) Sajid Munir, head of Preview, member AASHA
- 15) Uzma Noorani, HR Activist from Karachi

Private Sector

- 16) Jamil Yusouf (Sitara-i-Shujaat), Chairman, TPL Holdings (Pvt), Ex Chairman, Citizens Police Liaison Committee.
- 17) Asad Omer, CEO, Engro, Chairman, Pakistan Business Council
- 18) Romana Tanveer Shiekh, Chairperson, Federation of Chamber of Commerce

Development Donors

- 19) Saad Paracha, Asian Development Bank
- 20) Neva Humera Khan, Country Director, Oxfam
- 21) Representative of UNIFEM

Media

- 22) Mr. Zaffar Abbas, Editor, DAWN
- 23) Imran Aslam, President GEO
- 24) Murtaza Solangi, Director General, Radio Pakistan
- 25) Shahid Mehmood Nadeem, Deputy Managing Director, Pakistan Television

Names of representatives of government Ministries and departments mentioned above will be finalized by the relevant government secretaries and the Chair of this Committee jointly. The logistical arrangements and finances of the Committee will be managed independently by the Committee. The Committee will meet at least once in three months, and members will connect with each other on a regular basis to achieve their objectives. By the end of each year the Committee will report on progress made to the NCSW.

Round Table on Discriminatory Policies

The National Commission on the Status of Women initiated a study on women and policy in Pakistan at the beginning of 2010. The purpose of the study was to track discriminatory trends in current policies on women and highlight concerns; to find out the defective underpinning of gender discriminatory policy approaches; and, through a consultative process, recommend alternative approaches for fair and just policy making. It is hoped that the study will serve as a policy guideline for policy-makers and other stakeholders.

A collective consultation/meeting was held in Islamabad on May 2010 with several experienced activists, development experts and senior government officials. The thematic concerns of gender policy in Pakistan were presented by experts and challenges were discussed. Policies studied included: Social Protection Policy (with focus on the Benazir Income Support Program); Democratization, especially women's participation; Land Rights and Cultural Obstacles; Procedures and Policies on Legal Rights; Violence against Women; and Conflict and Security Policies. Around each theme the discussions included some related and interlinked broader concerns of concerning health, education, faith-based politics, family laws, media and labour.

Each thematic presentation pointed out flawed approaches or weaknesses in the policies examined. While

the vertical structure of all social protection policies, their flaws, exclusion and the lack of connection with broader economic policies were discussed, the Benazir Income Support Program, as the more recently instituted measure for social protection, invited much interest. Regarding Democratization, the presentation and discussion focused on quotas for political participation in governance. Inter-party culture, the essentialist approach to affirmative action for women, and a serious need to re-examine the qualitative results of reserved seats for women in Parliament were supported for policy scrutiny.

On the presentation of Right to Resources/Assets, the discussions revolved around the allocation of land to women and the gap between policy and implementation of this fundamental right of women. The presentation highlighted that it is "political will" that stops women's access to land. The theme of Procedural Policies on Family Laws and Violence against Women included a solid listing of obstacles for women's access to justice from police stations and registration of violations, right up to court procedures.

Finally, the presentation on Conflict and Security Policies, particularly in the tribal belt and in Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa, pinpointed the central flaw in policy approach that did not make a distinction between humanitarian and developmental assistance. The lack of an adequate number of crisis centers to provide basic facilities for women Internally Displaced

40th Meeting of NCSW

The 40th Board Meeting of the NCSW was held on 28th-29th April 2010 at the NCSW office in Islamabad under the chairpersonship of Ms Anis Haroon.

The Chairperson and Members discussed the recently held meeting of international Commissions on the Status of Women in New York, which was attended by the Chairperson and three Members of the Commission. The Executive Committee then updated participants regarding new developments and events, and views were shared about the current situation regarding women's rights. It was decided that a Regional Conference would be organized on the subject of Peace. The Chairperson suggested that in order to move forward in a systematic manner, Members should sit together and draw up a comprehensive strategic plan for the next two years.

Significant Decisions: The NCSW will endeavor that the women's perspective is included in any negotiations that may be held with the Taliban in Afghanistan; The Commission will celebrate National Women's Day on 12th February, which is being celebrated for the first time on an official level, jointly with the MoWD and the Women's Parliamentary Caucus; Recommendations presented by Ms Chairmaine Hidayatullah on the Qisas and Dyat laws were to be forwarded to Dr. Nasira Javed Iqbal; Mr Jamy Chan-

dio will follow-up the case of Shazia Abro.

As regards the strengthening of NCSW, it was decided that a Drawing and Disbursement Officer should be provided by MoWD; and the proposed amendments to the NCSW Ordinance 2000 would be vigorously pursued. Also the Commission will request the Ministry of Interior and the Police Protection Bureau to establish Anti *karo kari* cells in all provinces, AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. It was resolved that participation in international events should be decided well before time to allow for travel arrangements, and proper briefing of the delegates by the Foreign Office should be ensured.

Ms Khawar Mumtaz stressed that the mandate of the Commission should be kept in mind when acting on individual cases of violence against women, as the Commission is an advisory body not an implementing agency.

Justice (Retd.) Kailash Nath Kohli proposed legislation for Hindu women to address the issue of registration and dissolution of marriage and inheritance, as presently these issues are not covered under any existing law. The Chairperson further proposed sharing a document on the Child Marriage Restraint Act with Members before finalization

Decisions of 40th Meeting of NCSW Continued.....

and forwarding it to the Women's Caucus. Other suggestions were that the NCSW should propose that a quota of one women member from Islamabad should be instituted; and US Aid could be accepted if no conditions are attached after approval by the Economic Affairs Division. It was decided that seminars in Balochistan and Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa should be

Launching of Study Report on Nizam-e-Adl

In order to deepen understanding about the Nizam-i-Adl Regulation instituted in Swat, NCSW launched the first ever study on the new law. The study called "Nizam-i-Adl: Inside out" was conducted by researcher and former member of NCSW Ms Simi Kamal. The author presented the highlights of the study at a seminar held on 2nd June 2010 at the Hill View Hotel, Islamabad. Ms Sherry Rehman, MNA, Chairperson Anis Haroon, members of the Commission, representatives of different political parties and civil society participated in the event. The study was supported by UNIFEM. The study, which is in two parts, covers a total of 203 interviews across the country, including with IDPs from the area concerned, and includes reviews and events that lead up to the imposition of the Nizam-i-Adl Regulation. Findings regarding implementation showed that Nizam-i-Adl was not yet fully operational in Swat. The study looked at Nizam-e-Adl in the light of the Constitution of Pakistan and internationally agreed Human Rights Conventions, such as CEDAW and other covenants to which Pakistan is a signatory. It was also measured against national level policies, like NPDEW and National Plan of Action for Women, etc. Efforts were made to assess the opinion of different sections of society towards this law and its implementation, as well as to understand the possible impact on mobility and lives of women.

postponed because of security concerns. Members agreed to hold a roundtable consultation on the 18th Amendment immediately, and unanimously condemned the incidents of target killing in Balochistan, especially that of a woman educationist, and decided to issue a press release on the issue. Finally, it was decided that the Commission will request the AGPR to appoint an auditor to audit the Commission's accounts for the past year.



The study shows that the manner in which Islam has been interpreted in the rules and procedures of the regulation seems to go beyond the Islamic framework defined in the Constitution. It was found that the Nizam-i-Adl Regulation as designed was against the spirit of the Constitution and equality before law, and that it could serve to hamper development and empowerment of women. The study recommends that a uniform legal system should prevail in the whole country, and that FATA and PATA too should be brought into the mainstream and be subject to the same laws as the other provinces.

The NCSW is of the view that the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation that has been adopted and is being partially implemented in Swat contravenes internationally accepted standards of human rights and justice, and will serve to undermine women's human rights in particular.

NCSW draws attention on increase in cases of Violence Against Women

An increased number of violence against women cases are being reported from across the country in the media compared to previous years. These cases concern rapes, assault, honour killings, *vani* and *swara*, suicides and domestic violence. The Commission is of the strong opinion that there is an urgent need to include all stakeholders in policy decisions to ensure the safety and protection of women and safeguard their interests. Efforts at State and public level should be synergized and coordinated to eliminate violence and harassment.

NCSW responded to cases of gang rape, *karo kari*, and institutional discrimination, and attempted to mobilize support at different levels. Help from the media was sought to highlight the incident, letters were sent to the Registrar of the Supreme Court to respond on a priority basis, and political representatives and local officials were approached. Since the majority of cases were from Sindh, an active coordination and communication mechanism was established with the Sindh Police and District Police Officers and District Superintendents of Police were approached. In this way the sup-

port systems in Sindh were mobilized and their visibility enhanced, so that victims instead of coming to Islamabad, could seek help in their own area.

It was reported in the electronic and print media on 18/04/2010 that a minor girl of around fifteen years of age had alleged in the open court of the Additional Sessions Judge, Taxila, that she had been subjected to torture and rape by police officials of Police Station, Wah, during her illegal arrest and confinement for 21 days.

The NCSW took cognizance of the media reports and decided to send a fact finding team to the victim and to provide Legal Aid to her. As a result of the efforts made by lawyers hired by the Commission, all the culprits were arrested, their bail was cancelled and the case is being heard in court. NCSW held an emergency press conference and lobbied for justice at the highest level. The matter was consequently taken up by the Chief Minister Punjab.

Consultation on home based workers

A large number of women in Pakistan are engaged in home-based work. According to various estimates over 20 million women are working in value addition sectors, like the garment industry, the match industry, bangle making, stitching shoes, gloves, mobile covers, embroidering different items, carpet weaving, preparation of dry fruit, jewelry making, leather products, shelling prawns, and so on. Though their contribution to the national economy comes to 60 percent, they are the most unprivileged and invisible work force in society. Their daily income ranges between Rs. 10 to Rs. 50 (less than one dollar); while their working hours total up to between 12 to 16 hours a day. There is little social and legal recognition of their work. Working in the isolation of their homes, they have no rights as workers by law. Long working hours, poor working conditions and family pressure badly affect their health.

Like many other under developed countries, Pakistan's women workers' rights, particularly in the informal sector, have long been neglected and remain almost invisible, with zero labor rights and no access to social security schemes.

Thus, it is imperative to put in place legal/constitutional measures that can protect the labor and social rights of home-based women workers. The National Commission on

the Status of Women organized a consultation on "Social Protection of Home Based Workers" on June 7th at the office of the Commission. The key objectives were to analyze the existing circumstances of home-based women workers and to formulate a framework for legislation for the protection of this most vulnerable, and ever increasing, segment of society.

The consultation was chaired by Ms Shehnaz Wazir Ali, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for the Social Sector, and was concluded by Ms Yasmeen Rehman, Advisor to the PM on Ministry of Women's Development. Representatives of civil society organizations and networks, such as Home-Net, that have been working for the rights of home-based women workers, attended the meeting. The provincial governments were represented by Ms Ghazala Gola, Minister from Women's Development, Balochistan, and Ms Tauqeer Fatima Bhutto, Minister for Women's Development, Sindh. Senior officials from Punjab and AJK also participated. Ms Nafisa Shah, Secretary of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, offered to fully support efforts to give legal protection to home-based women workers.

The coalition on rights of home-based workers, KARKUN, gave a presentation on the current situation and outlined features of the legislation required.

Press conference on rising violence against women in the country

Responding to the rising number of cases of violence against women committed by police personnel being reported, the Commission held a press conference to emphasize the urgency of the matter, draw attention to violations of the police code and laws and demand that the offenders, no matter who they may be, must be punished. Cases reported in the past and the case of the young school girl from Taxila who remained in illegal police custody for more than fifteen days, were highlighted. The Chairperson drew attention to violations of the law by police officials who are being paid by taxpayers to protect citizens. She said that in the Natasha case the police took over three months to register the FIR against their fellow policemen, and it was registered only after public pressure was invoked. She pointed out that the investigation procedure is severely undermined by political high ups and corruption.

Other factors that contribute to weakening the judicial process are delays in medical examination of rape victims and shortage or absenteeism of medico-legal officers. Dr Fouzia Saeed, Executive Committee Member of the Commission, expressed her acute concern over the delay in police action against their colleagues. She said that procedural delays and ambiguities are leaving many question unanswered in the Natasha case. Samina Nazir from PODA was of the view that the police usually take too much time in registering cases on the complaint of women, which further encourages violators of the law to indulge in crimes against women.

The Commission showed its concern over the abetment by political personalities and unchecked police powers that are responsible for encouraging perpetrators to commit these heinous crimes. It urged that these practices must be stopped, and the aim must be to provide justice to the masses so that this vulnerable group in society can lead a life of dignity.

PRESS RELEASES ISSUED ON

Murder of Women Professor

The National Commission on the Status of Women in its 40th BoD meeting strongly condemned the murder of Nazma Talib, Associate Professor at the University of Balochistan. It expressed its strong concern on the continuing incidents of target killings which had earlier also taken the life of the husband of NCSW member from Balochistan, Ms Rukhsana Ahmed.

The Commission expressed its shock at the impunity with which the perpetrators of these heinous crimes go scot free; demanded that the criminals be apprehended and security be provided to people of all sects, including religious minorities. It stressed that vengeance against innocent citizens was not the way to resolve political conflicts.

Violence Inflicted Upon Nurses

The National Commission on the Status of Women expressed grave concern at the violence inflicted on peacefully demonstrating nurses from the PIMS Hospital in Islamabad. Nurses provide medical care to suffering humanity with dedication and commitment round the clock, and their services should be duly acknowledged and suitably rewarded. Nurses are often discriminated against and there have been many complaints of sexual harassment in hospitals. Their long standing problems need to be addressed by the government and the hospital administration.

It urged the government and the women parliamentarians in particular, to address the issue and facilitate an amicably resolution of the problems facing nurses, not only in PIMS but generally in the country. It recommended that an impartial inquiry should be undertaken and justice provided to the nurses as per their demand.

UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights

The NCSW welcomed the Government's decision to sign the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights. The Commission hoped that the implementation of this Convention would go a long way in ensuring equal rights to all men and women in the country.

It urged the government to address the conditions in the country where women were victims of all kinds of violence for many years. There is gross violation of women's right to life, to physical and social security, and to choose whom they wish to marry. Their rights to education, health, adequate nourishment, and freedom of expression are denied. And the increasing number of cases of domestic violence is a matter of serious concern.

The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan clearly gives equal fundamental rights to all citizens of the state, which can be applied in the area of marriage and family. Pakistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1996, but women still continue to be commodified and bartered for land or money, given as *swara* (compensation for murder or dispute settlement) shackled in *watta satta* exchange marriages. Women are abused, raped or murdered by close relatives. 'Honor' killing, once an unusual custom, have recently become a common practice in which men kill sisters, daughters, or other female family members to avenge the perceived dishonor of the family.

The NCSW strongly appealed to the Government of Pakistan to take immediate and comprehensive action to end these violations, and take measures to promote and protect women's human rights at all levels. It recommended that: The government should enforce a suitable law to deal with domestic violence without any further delay; The law addressing acid throwing attacks against women should be urgently promulgated because the present laws are insufficient to deal with this heinous crime; The representation of women in the legislative assemblies should be increased to at least 33%; The Citizenship Act needs to be amended, as it is discriminatory and negates the principle of gender equality, since foreign husbands of Pakistani women, unlike foreign women married to Pakistani men, are not given Pakistani citizenship.

Women Parliamentarians Convention

The NCSW welcomed the initiative taken by the Women's Caucus in the National Assembly to organize a dynamic and vibrant conference of women parliamentarians from across the country and the South Asia region on the issue of "The role of women parliamentarians in peace building and reconciliation".

In its message to the conference the Commission appreciated the topic chosen and said that peace building and reconciliation were badly needed at this time. The country had been enduring attacks by terrorists and women and children had been the worst affected. Socio-economic development in the country had been paralyzed and the lives of millions of innocent men, women and children seriously disrupted.

This National Convention of Women Parliamentarians provided an opportunity to learn and share experiences. NCSW expressed the hope that the active participation of women parliamentarians from Pakistan and other South Asian countries would help in promoting understanding, and would strengthen women parliamentarians' role in the development and peace building process. It hoped that the event would reinforce the notion that peace, which had so far been elusive, can only be restored if all key stakeholders, particularly women, and were made an integral part of the politics of reconciliation

Nominations for peace prizes

The NCSW nominated Arundathi Roy, Hina Jilani and I.A.Rehman for the Benazir Bhutto Peace Awards. Citations for these three prominent personalities were prepared by the Commission's office and forwarded to the office of the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Ms.Shehnaz Wazir Ali, for further processing.