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Women's uplift

PPP leader underscores need for removeing 'political barriers'

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ISLAMABAD: While celebrating 100 years of international women day, Dr. Nafisa Shah, Secretary Women's Parliamentary Caucus Saturday urged removal of political barriers for socio-economic uplift of women.

"Political blockades should not hinder women development and we must work across party lines for empowerment of the women," Ms. Shah said while addressing the launching ceremony of National Advisory Forum of Gender Equality Programme (GEP) organised by USAID and Aurat Foundation.

The USAID has allocated \$ 40 million for the five-year GEP programme. The programme aims at advancing women's rights and empowerment in pursuance of the gender policies aimed at by the government of Pakistan. Under GEP, a series of sub-grants will be awarded to public and private sector entities with the objective of efficient real behavioural change and contributing to a productive gender equity debate with Pakistan.

Dr. Nafisa Shah paid homage to Shaheed Benazir Bhutto's sacrifice for democracy and her vision for the women and highlighted the importance of women's empowerment for a

prosperous Pakistan and women's achievements over a period of 100 years. She said that the government had made a strategic shift when it comes to policy making for the women and quoted Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) to substantiate her point. While highlighting the steps taken by Sindh government, she said for the first time in history women have been given the entitlement to own properties. Since GEP is a five-year program, Dr. Nafisa Shah urged the government to set up such funds for carrying forward the agenda of women empowerment.

Dr. Marilyn Wyatt, wife of US Ambassador to Pakistan, Cameron Munter said that the United States has made a long-term commitment to improving the lives of women in Paksitan and that all US development strategies reflect the importance of women's core role in raising families, providing health care, running businesses, providing education and feeding children. She referred to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and reiterated American commitment to goal number 3: Promotion of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment.

"We consult women as we design our programs and we hold our programs accountable in terms of impact they have on

the lives of women and girls. We are using our resources everywhere to create educational and professional opportunities for women, especially hard-working, ordinary women who are the bedrock of our societies," she added.

In addition, Ms. Saadia Danish, Advisor to Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, Ms. Ghazala Gola, Provincial Minister Balochistan, Ms. Sitara Ayaz, Provincial Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ms. Tauqeer Fatimah Bhutto, Provincial Minister Sindh and Mr. Karman Michael, Provincial Minister Punjab revealed the steps taken by their respective governments for social and economic uplift of women.

A documentary "Main Safar Main Hoon" was also screened during the event. The documentary focused on the 100 year journey of women all over the world, particularly highlighting the achievements and sacrifices of Pakistani women, starting from 1911 till 2011. The objective of the documentary was to portray a positive image of Pakistani women and highlight their achievement in different fields of life and carries a very motivating message, that is, women can excel at anything they do provided they are determined, committed and strong.