

Thank you Madam Chair, today on this Forum I am representing the largest religious minority in India which is the Muslim community. For a long time the discourse around the community development pretty much revolved around the religious framework, nobody giving serious thought to the development status of the community.

In March 2005, Prime Minister Doctor Manmohan Singh established a seven member committee under the chairmanship of Honourable Justice Rajinder Sachar with a mandate to provide a comprehensive report about the social, economical and educational status of Muslim community. The committee presented its report properly known as Sachar Committee Report in 2006 which has been a landmark document in several respects. The wealth of data contained in the report provide concrete and irrefutable evidence that Muslims in India lag beyond with regard all socio-economic indicators. It highlights the fact that the growing stereotyping and negative impact of communal tension has increasingly compelled the Muslim community to alienate from others and retreat into religious and community spaces. Neglecting this fact the fundamentalists are raising their argument that it is the community itself that does not want to be mainstreamed. This report and other data sources, made the central government realise the need to focus on providing resources and enhancing the capacities of the Muslims so as to enable their access to education, employment and government schemes and programmes. Hence the government started various initiatives to implement the recommendation of the Sachar committee. Consequently the ministry of minority affairs was established to look into the matters of the minorities and specific funds were allocated for the utilisation of their development. The Prime Minister initiated and in some cases relaunched various programmes and schemes such as 15 point programme, multi-sectoral programme and scholarship programme focusing on improving Muslim communities social, economical and educational status.

However though on paper these efforts seem worthwhile and [...] implementation is still something that needs to be closely monitored. It is a herculean task for those that want to avail of the benefit of these schemes, here I would like to share one example to substantiate my point. A friend of mine who has a lucrative job in cosmopolitan city left the job and started a school for working in a religious mode which provides modern education as well as religious education in Lakno city. It caters to 200 children living in slum areas and coming from very poverty stricken families, she tried to access scholarship scheme for minority advancement for these children but when she approached the district minority officer the clerk looking after the scholarship programme asks a given percentage on every scholarship fund, she tried to reason with him but as he was adamant she left feeling disgusted and frustrated as there is no agency where one could redress this blatant and on the face corruption.

It is interesting to note that the fundamentalist always allege Muslim appeasement as on paper there are so many schemes and programmes for the development of Muslim community with billions of money budgeted into it. Yet the fact remains that the governments of the so-called Muslim, pro Muslim and secular regime is such that they are unable to deliver the benefit of these schemes to the targeted people. This situation puts the community in a very peculiar spot, on one side we have political parties who are supposedly pro-Muslim who on paper have designed attractive programmes

for Muslims which in turn fuel the right wing agenda XX charging them of Muslim appeasement. The Muslim community gets the worse of both. The chronic corruption within the system prevents them from exercising the benefits of government programmes, on the other hand they became the target of right wing parties charging the secular parties with appeasing them in order to nurture the Muslim vote bank.

Here I would like to make it clear that corruption in the delivery system is not peculiar to programmes targeted for Muslim communities as a rule money allocated for the social sector, be it for affirmative action for the Dalits, disabled or destitute, it hardly trickles down to the beneficiaries especially in another state of India. The government do not have educated political will to monitor and the administration take advantage of this fact. In the case of Muslim community, the consequences of such corruption become more glaring as they do not have other recourses such as reservation which are available to other marginalised communities. These instances show that there is an imminent need to monitor the implementation and execution of these schemes so that benefit could reach those for whom they are actually meant.

I hope that this declaration would act as a tool in advocating for a creation of an enabling environment which would allow the community to monitor the execution of these programmes and ensure easy access to these benefits so that a level playing field could be created in due course ensuring that the Muslim community no longer need as special favour for their development. I would like as we have the, the declaration is so invisible in our country I hope I would like that Mrs. Iszak the independent expert would grace us with her visit so that we have more visibility towards this declaration. Thank you for your attention.