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UN chief calls Benazir Income Support Programme model for other countries UNITED NATIONS, July 31 (APP): Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Thursday praised the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), saying it was oriented along the lines of his vision of helping the world's most vulnerable people. The secretary-general made these remarks during a meeting with Chairperson of BISP Farzana Raja at UN Headquarters in New York when she briefed him on the progress resulting from the eight-months-old programme, which is aimed at empowering women and reducing poverty. Ms. Raja told Pakistani journalists after the 30-minute meeting that the Secretary-General took note of the fact that BISP is based on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the globally agreed set of social and economic targets that are supposed to be realized by 2015.



Federal Minister & Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Ms. Farzana Raja with Secretary General United Nations Ban Ki-Moon in New York on July 30, 2009

She said that Ban proposed that Pakistan share this “model programme” with other countries, especially those in South Asia. “I congratulate the President (Asif Ali Zardari) and you for helping the most vulnerable people of your country,” Ban told the Chairperson.

“This programme is good for your country, good for your people and should be shared with other countries.” Through sheer hard work, she said, programme is already extending financial help to 2.2 million deserving families against the target of 3.5 million in which the household woman receives Rs. 1,000 per month. The idea, she added, was to bring the women into the mainstream. Besides cash help, the programme carries other benefits like health and accident insurances as well as vocational training so that the recipients ultimately become self-sufficient.

Farzana Raja said she also told the secretary-general that the programme was non-partisan designed to help the most deserving Pakistanis. “This is not a party specific programme, it is for the people of Pakistan, because of its transparency, the entire world, donor agencies are cooperating and are sending their offers to us,” she said. Ms. Raja said a poverty census was being carried out across the country with the help of the World Bank to identify more deserving households so that they could benefit from the programme. In addition, She said the BISP was also helping the families of the victims of bomb blasts and those of the earthquakes as well as the displaced persons from the Swat region.