



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN Geneva

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Statement by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Permanent Representative of Pakistan

Agenda Item 3: Regional Activities and Global Programmes (a) i. Regional Update of Asia and the Pacific (08 March, 2022)

Chairperson,

We thank the Asia Bureau for providing the update and commend your able stewardship of the Standing Committee.

We commend the UNHCR leadership and the field staff for standing tall in testing times.

We also appreciate the assistance that international partners have provided to refugees.

Chairperson,

Humanitarian challenges continue to escalate testing the resilience of international norms and mechanisms.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added another layer of challenges to the work of UNHCR. The pandemic has put severe strains on all countries. Yet the developing countries have borne most of its brunt.

Vaccine equity remains a moral and humanitarian imperative for both refugees and host countries. We commend UNHCR for its advocacy and encourage it enhance its outreach with international partners with a view to accelerating vaccination drives for refugees and their hosts.

Despite economic and public health challenges of its own, Pakistan has continued to provide millions of refugees equitable access to vaccinations, education, health and livelihoods.

Chairperson,

After four decades of conflict, Afghanistan today stands at a cross road. Even as apprehensions persist about deterioration in humanitarian situation inside Afghanistan, there is also an opportunity to avert yet another crisis through enhanced engagement aimed at political, economic and social stabilization of the country.

Pakistan welcomes the efforts undertaken by the UN system, UNHCR, ICRC and other organizations to galvanize much needed humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. The generous contributions have been critical to preventing a major human catastrophe so far. A sustained effort is therefore essential.

Despite financial constraints, Pakistan has so far provided humanitarian support exceeding USD 35 million. We have helped establish humanitarian supplies hub; facilitated transit trade and cross border movement of Afghans in need.

Pakistan also hosted an extraordinary Ministerial Meeting of the OIC in December 2021 to mobilize humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan. The Ministerial meeting decided to establish a Humanitarian Trust Fund, strengthen OIC Mission in Kabul and Food Security Programme. Together with the UN and international organizations, these OIC-led initiative will help in channelizing much needed assistance.

In terms of refugee protection, last year, Pakistan carried out a Document Renewal and Information Verification Exercise (DRIVE) with support for UNHCR.

Pakistan remains actively engaged with the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) and its Support Platform, which have provided useful mechanism to mobilize support.

Chairperson,

There are legitimate concerns over the situation of human rights, the nature of power sharing and terrorism in Afghanistan. They must be addressed meaningfully.

Similarly, a further review of sanctions and unfreezing of financial assets of Afghanistan is essential. These measures are critical to the functioning of the banking system, flow of humanitarian assistance and provision of basic services.

Helping the people of Afghanistan inside the country is both a cost effective and durable solution.

Amidst this crisis lies an opportunity for sustainable peace and development in Afghanistan after decades of conflict. Peace, security, development and human rights can and should be advanced in mutually reinforcing ways.

Such a pathway requires prudent sequencing and prioritization of actions by enhanced political and diplomatic engagement, in tandem with humanitarian and economic assistance.

Similarly, a comprehensive approach along the lines of Humanitarian Development and Peace Nexus (HDPN) needs to be pursued.

Chairperson,

There are lessons to be learnt from past experiences. Managing the humanitarian situation alone is not sufficient. A strategic approach, anchored in pursuit of durable solutions and prevention is urgently needed than ever. The most preferred and best solution remains voluntary repatriation in a safe, dignified and well-resourced manner.

It is equally important to create conducive conditions for voluntary returns such as; an environment free of violence, political, social and economic stabilization in the troubled regions. Sustained engagement with Afghanis, therefore, indispensable to create these conditions.

International collaboration and assistance designed to secure durable solutions and meeting their protection needs by consistent application of the principle of equitable burden and responsibility sharing remains essential.

I thank you.
