



**Explanation of Vote before the Vote, delivered by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Pakistan Permanent Representative to the UN, during adoption of the draft resolution A/HR/47/L.22 titled “The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet”**

**13 July 2021**

Madam President,

We consider the thematic focus of draft resolution L.22 on digital divide and its gendered impacts as timely.

The internet has permeated political, social, economic and cultural facets of our modern life. During the COVID pandemic, our reliance on Internet has increased manifold. This has further driven home the human rights imperative of bridging the digital divide within and among countries.

Madam President,

During consultations, we engaged constructively to further enrich the proposed text in the following three significant areas:

**First**, developing countries are in dire need of international support and assistance to bridge the digital divide. The COVID pandemic has disproportionately contracted economies of these countries, making it even more difficult for them to enhance accessibility, affordability and availability of the Internet. We, therefore, call on the global North to facilitate the availability, affordability and accessibility of various internet-related technologies, infrastructure and tools, in the spirit of ‘leaving no one behind’.

**Second**, cyberspace has enabled a sharp increase in irresponsible use and spread of words, opinions, behavior and actions, which bear real-time human rights cost, ranging from loss of lives to ostracization of entire communities. The pandemic has further accentuated these disturbing trends. The tsunami of ‘infodemic’ and ‘hate pandemic’ have revalidated the need for evenly calibrating the freedom of expression and opinion with the responsibilities and duties germane to its exercise, as enshrined in Articles 19 and 20 of ICCPR.

**Third**, the global normative discourse on relationship between Internet and its empowering impact requires application of a wider lens, which does not prioritize one category of human rights over others. Digital dividends of Internet can propel socio-economic development, which, in turn, anchors human rights efforts at all levels on a solid footing.

We thank the core group for its constructive approach and openness to accommodate proposals, including those of our delegation. Pakistan supports the theme of the draft resolution L.22, and would vote in its favour. I thank you.