



National Statement by Mr. Afaq Ahmad, Counsellor during Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner on her Oral Update “Central role of the State in responding to pandemics and other health emergencies, and the socioeconomic consequences thereof, in advancing sustainable development and the realization of all human rights”

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Mr. President,

We thank the High Commissioner for presenting a thoughtful diagnostic of the severe socio-economic challenges resulting from the COVID pandemic.

As one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century, the pandemic has wreaked unprecedented human suffering. The virus has also deepened inequalities within and among States, and impeded States' capacities to ensure the realization and enjoyment of human rights.

Although the impact of COVID is global but it has disproportionately affected developing states by reducing their fiscal space, and exacerbating debt burdens. This has in turn hampered their efforts to alleviate poverty, provide decent work, health and education and achieve progress towards SDGs. Despite economic constraints, Pakistan rolled out robust social protection, public health and fiscal stimulus measures to save lives and livelihoods.

Vaccine inequity and vaccine nationalism remain the most visible manifestations of the systemic and structural anomalies in the global public health and financial architectures.

Mr. President,

Even as the acute phase of the global health emergency is over, stark economic and financial realities are hindering even recovery from the effects of the pandemic. The High Commissioner has rightly called for transformative steps to support developing countries in addressing severe fiscal limitations attributable to the pandemic. Such measures demand political commitment, solidarity and scaled up investments to improve socio-economic indicators, sustainable infrastructure and human development.

Countering the multiple impacts of COVID and ensuring the enjoyment of human rights are mutually reinforcing. We echo global calls for mobilization of international development financing, debt relief and enhanced public finance lending. We encourage the OHCHR to redouble its advocacy efforts and the Council to enlarge the scope of technical assistance in support of such efforts.

I thank you.