



**Statement by Senator Sherry Rehman, Minister for Climate Change of
Pakistan at UN Flash Appeal**

04 October 2022

Director General WHO, Dr. Tedros

Under-Secretary General, Mr. Martin Griffiths

Excellencies,

Thank you for giving me and Pakistan this opportunity today, for the second time. Gratitude must never be implicit, so I will share more explicit appreciation as I close.

The video you just saw is nothing like the atlas of human suffering on the ground. This is just a postcard from the edge of the precipice. The climate dystopia is so deep, so completely transformational, and so mind-bending, that in the night, huge parts of the country look like a comet hit one part of our planet.

This is no ordinary disaster, no monsoon, or flood. This is climate carnage making landfall in a country with almost no carbon footprint; as a country, we

are responsible for less than 1% of global GHG emissions. But global warming's accelerated attacks on the earth, on Pakistan have begun.

As the magnitude of the tragedy filters in, it is becoming clear to all that this is the meta-climate event of a century, crossing all records for the whole world, not just for Pakistan. The scale of the catastrophe is more than existential, it is a rubicon crossed for all climate disasters,

We are gathered here to reboot your compassion simply because the numbers are too staggering to service for any one country alone.

The armageddon on this ground zero of climate emergency, if you can find ground in the south, is that on our own we are unable to provide shelter, food, hygiene and health to too many in need, in distress from the trauma of displacement, death and disease.

Just for context, 33 million people affected are 7 million more than the entire population of Australia. Imagine rescuing, feeding, sheltering, resettling an entire country? We have been working round the clock, flat out through the aftershocks, but just to pick up the pieces we will literally need a new coalition of the willing.

In the monstrous downpour that inundated 1/3rd of the country, approximately 1,700 people have lost their lives and close to 13,000 are injured. 7.9 million are still displaced. Women and children make up nearly 70 percent of the 33 million affected, One-third of all recorded deaths and injuries are children.

We are still in the longest rescue and relief and lifesaving phase, crossing 16 nightmarish weeks.

This is principally because the flooding is of all types: flash flooding, hill torrents, and the monster monsoon have all clustered in one era-defining climate disaster to create new records of extreme weather and water volumes, volatility and unpredictability.

34 districts are crisis affected with 46,000 square kilometers still in fluid conditions, which just for perspective, is more than Switzerland's entire physical area, and an estimated 20.6 million people are in need. This number is more than the size of Switzerland and Portugal's population combined. These are not just statistics. These are real people on the ground, whose eyes are still vacant from shock, who have overnight been turned into posterchildren of extreme vulnerability, with futures that are entirely precarious, and for women, are layered with another burden of compounded social fragility and campsite predations.

So, with 11 districts still under water, (it is surreal to see the Pakistan Navy still deployed in this inland terrain to service those who have survived) many still seek aid hubs for food, clean water and medical assistance, and tragically even dry land, to bury their dead.

And because large swathes of the country, particularly in the south, which is lower than sea level now, are still festering under huge swampy lakes of water which has nowhere to drain, 8.2 million people require urgent medical services, while 4 percent of the disaster affected population is actually pregnant. We are urgently in need of life-saving medicines, reproductive health kits, among a host of other needs specified in the appeal document.

With more than 1,400 health facilities damaged, I will leave Dr Tedros to tell you more about the risk-exposure of millions pushed into fresh peril by the health emergency now menacing the country.

Excellencies, for us, and them, it is a real race against time.

Winter is coming.

Left to the mercy of the open sky, shelters have been made available for 598,000, while over 7.9 million still scramble for dry land to pitch tarpaulins, which we desperately need, as cold weather is very near. 4 million people live in areas where temperatures turn sub-zero, and even in the warmest affected areas, the mercury typically falls below 10° C.

Nutrition needs too, need a scaled-up response, as 7.1 million people still are in need, and 3.9 million targeted with this appeal, with most priorities identified for severe and acute malnutrition. With FAO surveys suggesting 9.4 million acres of standing crops inundated and affected, this will directly put at risk 14.6 million people, who live and work very close to nature, in the line of a food sector and agriculture crisis. Livelihoods will continue to face aftershocks, but 15.4 million more people will be pushed into hardscrabble poverty.

Relief efforts have been slowed down because the fury of the floods have ripped out over 13,000 Kms of roads and torn down 440 bridges all over the country. Railway lines are still not fully restored.

I am here of course to ask for the burden to be shared. Meeting the needs on the ground even for the relief phase is beyond the overstretched capacities of any one country, especially one that has already been paying for climate losses to the

tune of 9.1 % of our GDP. Our export crops are almost all wiped out, and we will even need to import food after this flood. Given the global energy shortages, our import bills are critically impacted, especially as we compete with far richer countries to pay for clean gas on the international market. With debt payments looming, and with the farmers and other impacted sectors already demanding loss and damage reparations, including support on agriculture inputs from Islamabad, the exogenous shock to the economic system for mobilising resources is critically high. We have no space to give our economy a stimulus package, which would create jobs, and provide people with the sustainable incomes they need. We are still in a long, relentless struggle to save lives, and get the joint surveys out wherever we can access affected areas.

We are grateful to the INGO sector and Pakistan's civil society which is already moving a vital supply chain of essential needs for millions.

In government, very few of us, from the highest levels of public offices to all civil and military services, have had a full night's sleep since the flood. We are moving every available resource to the lifesaving effort. The Government of Pakistan has repurposed all of its existing budgetary envelopes, including all climate adaptation and resilience funds, to continue to provide ex-gratia compensations to affected households, as the toll of fatalities and loss and damage keep rising. To ensure that the poor have access to immediate cash relief, over US\$261 million has been dispersed to 2.4 million people from the affected populations via our BISP program, with complete transparency.

This, as the UNSG said when he visited Pakistan, is the outcome of mankind's war on nature, and now that nature has unleashed its furies in the first phase, of this new long war on mankind, Pakistan is on the frontlines of this terrible war.

He spoke repeatedly of climate justice, reminding us that the humanitarian crises that arise from climate emergencies now need funding mechanisms. These should be capitalised for a swift, agile and transparent transfer of resources from a pool of financing from developed countries that accelerates the design and delivery of humanitarian aid. Countries in a different category of climate vulnerability and development trajectory, like Pakistan, need urgent global, institutionalized responses for building defenses against climate disasters.

While we brace for a cascade of medium- and long-term impacts, which I will spare you for now, all we are saying is please don't leave us alone to face the frontline of what the UNSG said was an outcome of mankind's war on nature. We have fought enough in another 20 yearlong militarised war next door to us, where we lost 80,000 people in the war against violent extremism. But we are NO match for nature's long war on our doorstep. It is also clear now that climate disaster zones cause more havoc than active war zones, which contribute to the carbon footprint of the 3-degree world we are all hurtling towards. Compared to three days spent on a typical war, say like in Afghanistan, which spent up to 300 million USD per day for twenty years, this 816 million USD will actually save millions of lives.

If an entire generation is lost to this catastrophe, without livelihoods, educations, healthcare, what will we tell our people?

That we must reduce our emissions, but please become part of a new set of hunger games, where eventually only the resilient and the better prepared survive? Who will build an arc of survival against this biblical flood? If we don't act to save the frontline, what message will we give our destitute and our homeless?

Your efforts, thankfully, tell us we are all better than that.

This Second Appeal urgently seeks US\$ 816 million to provide prioritized multi-sectoral aid. There are a total of 20.6 million people still in need. This humanitarian appeal targets protection to 9.5 million people until 31st May 2023, with focus on the 34 districts in all four provinces.

This is just the tip of the iceberg; after the immediate relief effort, we will have to look towards rehabilitation and resilience building, which will of course require funding.

We are grateful to those present in the room, and others outside.

The GOP, the PM and the entire cabinet, share their deepest appreciation for the support the UNSG has mobilised, while his journey to the heart of the catastrophe zones, has given us some hope.

Friendly governments too have been on the move to do what they can. Our development partners are busy working on a final needs assessment for October.

I also want to thank the UN RC Julien Harnies who has been living almost permanently in the vortex of the crisis, for his empathy and stamina. Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham (Head and rep of OCHA-Geneva), Mr. Martin Griffiths (Under Secretary General for humanitarian affairs), our colleagues from the humanitarian community (NGOs), (who has made a special effort to join us from NY) and Excellencies here (resident missions in Geneva) also deserve our heartfelt appreciation for clustering with our government agencies for a heavy lift on the ground. Last but not the least, I would like to thank Dr. Tedros

Adhanom Ghebreyesus (Director General-WHO), for his leadership and high-level attention to the extreme health risks in Pakistan.

Each country or donor contribution will give back a family a future. Each contribution will save millions of lives. It will also let us in Pakistan know we are not alone.

All of it helps.