



National Statement, delivered by Mr. Afaq Ahmad, Counsellor, at the 2021 Social Forum

11 October 2021

Mr. Chair-Rapporteur,

We thank all the key-note speakers for their insightful views this morning on a theme that touches on the rights, needs, and concerns of our people, societies and economies.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, more than 180 million people have died, around 120 million people have been pushed back to extreme poverty, over 100 million people face undernourishment, 265 million are facing hunger crisis and over 250 million have lost jobs.

These grim facts speak to unprecedented human suffering and loss; they also point to further deepening of inequalities and impeding capacities of states to ensure realization of rights and wellbeing of people, especially the most vulnerable among them.

Although the wider impacts are visible across the globe but the COVID has disproportionately constrained developing countries' capacities to withstand its effects. Their reduced fiscal space, growing debt burdens and liquidity crunch has hindered their plans to alleviate poverty, provide decent work, health and education and to fulfill their development needs and achieve progress towards SDGs. Continued capital and financial flows through illicit means has robbed many developing countries the vital resources for national economic and social development.

Vaccine inequity is the most visible manifestation of social and economic disparities of our times. It has laid bare the continued existence of systemic and structural flaws that nurture discrimination in the global public health and financial systems. Unfortunately, lack of access to and timely availability of vaccine continues to impose devastating human costs. "Vaccine nationalism", "stockpiling of vaccine doses beyond legitimate needs" and continued reluctance to approve temporary waivers of patents cannot be morally or ethically justified. These actions go against the core spirit of human values.

Mr. Chair-Rapporteur,

COVID pandemic is one of the greatest challenges faced by humanity in the last one century. Recovering from COVID effects and building back better requires integrated development and human rights-based responses. To address multiple impacts of COVID pandemic and achieve our shared objective to ensure enjoyment of human rights, we echo global calls for:

One, mobilization of international liquidity, debt relief and enhanced concessional finance.

Two, greater investments in social protection regimes across the globe especially supporting developing states as it would enhance communities' resilience in meeting basic needs.

Three, combating illicit financial flows from developing countries to safe heavens by removing undue legal and procedural barriers in the recovery and return of stolen assets of developing countries and by mandating the United Nations General Assembly to establish mediation mechanisms to overcome such obstacles.

Four, ensuring universal, timely and affordable access to vaccines as a public good; and

Five, expediting progress towards early TRIPS waiver and removal of undue export restrictions plug the gap between supply and demand and to ramp up vaccine production with a view to ensuring equity for all. I thank you.