



## Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN Geneva

### Statement

#### Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the Substantive Session of ECOSOC 2021 (23-25 June 2021)

**“Strengthening humanitarian assistance to face the challenges of 2021 and beyond: mobilizing respect for international humanitarian law, inclusion, gender, innovation and partnerships”**

**Statement by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi,  
Permanent Representative of Pakistan**

**Honorable Chairperson,**

The world is facing arguably the most serious global health crisis since the establishment of the United Nations and ECOSOC with grave humanitarian and economic consequences. Poverty has increased, as has hunger. Achievement of SDGs is being questioned. Threat of climate change appears imminent. COVID Vaccine availability and affordability to the poorer countries remain inconsistent. Defiance and violation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is on the rise.

Humanitarian caseloads continue to grow. A record 264.2 million people in the world need humanitarian assistance. 270 million people are facing starvation. The number of forcibly displaced people has reached another unenviable record of 82.4 million.

Even as the number and humanitarian needs continue to grow, the humanitarian financing is coming under increasing and severe strain. The funding gap has increased to a massive \$10 billion a year. The OCHA-coordinated Global Humanitarian Overview for 2020 called for \$38.5 billion, which donors generously responded to with \$19 billion in funding. Despite this, many are awaiting our help.

Pakistan has contributed to international humanitarian causes, shared the burden and demonstrated humanitarian leadership by hosting millions of Afghan refugees for over four decades, providing them protection, access to education, health and livelihoods. Our public health response to pandemic and vaccination is inclusive of refugees.

Pakistan had faced humanitarian emergencies arising from natural disasters and climate related events. Together with international partners, Pakistan responded effectively to these emergencies and has developed a disaster response system. We continue to augment its national capacities of preparedness, response and mitigation with a focus on policy development, institutional capacity building, improving coordination, and coherence.

## **Inclusion**

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed existing inequalities in access to food, education, health, housing, as well as to justice, inciting xenophobia and discrimination.

Reducing inequalities is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a stand-alone goal (SDG10). 'Leaving no one behind' is also the overarching principle for this universal framework. Solidarity and cooperation among countries, societies, communities, and individual citizens is in most demand, but unfortunately in short supply, to combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

SDG 16 also rightly speaks of inclusion. This implies a future global economic and social order where no country, people, or individual are excluded from the benefits of development and progress, and a new and equal national and international order. We must work collectively to promote the vision of such an equal and inclusive world where no one is left behind.

## **Gender**

Gender equality benefits both men and women. This equality is central to the overall well being and health of communities and societies. Gender inequalities, in particular, have been exacerbated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and more so in humanitarian situations.

Gender equality and the advancement of women are critical for ensuring that the recovery from the pandemic supports the transition to a more sustainable and equitable development.

## **Innovation**

COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the pace of digital transformation and innovation. Business, commerce, production, health systems, education all is now relevant and dependent on remote connectivity. Humanitarian activities have benefitted from digital tools and innovation. However, humanitarian operations in remote parts could not benefit due to unavailability of these tools.

The existing digital divide could become the new face of the development divide further exacerbating the inequalities. Therefore, there is an urgent need to tackle factors behind the digital divide which include lack of infrastructure, high

cost of digital equipment, lack of digital skills and literacy, and absence of relevant content in local languages. It also requires significant investment in infrastructure to connect people.

To promote innovation, digital skills and literacy, there is an urgent need to invest in people, by improving access to quality education.

If we are to “build back better” from the wreckage of the COVID crisis, other humanitarian emergencies and accelerate the realization of the SDGs, the application and absorption of new technologies in the humanitarian and development paradigm is indispensable.

International cooperation is essential to promote innovation, creativity and solidarity.

### **Partnerships**

If ever there was need for partnerships, it is now. The humanitarian crises compounded with COVID 19 pandemic are the most serious and the most pervasive crises.

The United Nations, with its universality and convening power, is the fountain of partnerships between states, companies, and civil society across the world.

Partnerships are invaluable instruments in the promotion of prosperity and development. We must build and fully utilize these partnerships to respond to and recover from the crisis.

### **International Humanitarian Law (IHL)**

Pakistan accords deep respect to the principles of IHL. We call upon all states and other actors to respect IHL in humanitarian activities. Protection of civilians is fundamental.

We emphasize that:

- The humanitarian assistance must conform to Resolution 46/182; and the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence should be respected, in all circumstances.
- Accountability of all humanitarian actors especially in the area of delivery on ground should be ensured.
- Work of humanitarian actors should conform to host country needs, priorities and agreements.

- Humanitarian actors should tap into local resources to save funds and contribute to long-term development.

The multiple challenges we face, are also opportunities- an opportunity to build a better, more equitable and resilient global economic and social system.

Let us collectively work and summon the necessary political will to alleviate the suffering of those caught up in humanitarian crises around the world.

**I thank you.**