



**National Statement delivered by Mr. Umair Shakoor, Assistant Director, during
the Interactive Dialogue with the SR on the Right to Freedom of Opinion and
Expression**
53rd HRC Session
23 June 2023

Mr. President,

We thank the SR for her report.

We appreciate the focus of the report on significance of right to freedom of opinion and expression in the context of access to information in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In view of intrinsic and interconnected nature of all human rights, critical role of the right to freedom of expression remains visible in ensuring inclusive decision making. *Ranging from eliminating poverty to achieving gender equality as well as ensuring access to education, health and sanitation services to climate action.* Progress on each and every SDG is dependent on access to information and availability of reliable data.

We echo SR's call for promoting transparency in the return of stolen assets as well as bridging the digital divide.

We reiterate our support for the right to freedom of expression, in line with stipulated responsibilities, as an essential enabler of other human rights and sustainable development.

We also understand that access to information, much like freedom of opinion, comes with responsibilities and limitation as per the law.

We believe that the relationship between the right to freedom of expression and SDGs is not a linear one. It requires a holistic analysis. Existing geopolitical environment, shrinking financial and fiscal space, rising debt burdens, growing global inequalities, and systemic challenges related to transparency in decision-making in International Financial Institutions, continue to impede achievement of 2030 agenda.

We request the SR to comment on how international cooperation can be strengthened especially strengthening flow of information, knowledge and sharing of technology beyond national boundaries to make progress towards SDGs knowledge?

I thank you.