



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN Geneva

44th Human Rights Council Session

Resolution A/HRC/44/L.18 Rev.1 [as orally revised] on 'Freedom of Opinion and Expression'

Explanation of Vote before the Vote by Pakistan

16 July 2020

Madam President,

Pakistan thanks the core group for presenting the draft resolution on "Freedom of Opinion and Expression", as contained in document L.18 Rev.1 [*as orally revised*].

Since the first HRC resolution in 2009, three clear trends in this thematic area merit reflection in our collective update of the text:

Firstly, proliferation of social media platforms has enabled a sharp increase in irresponsible use of words, opinions, behavior and actions, both offline and online, resulting in loss of human lives, causing damage to personal reputation and ostracizing entire communities.

The Christchurch terrorist attack is one such instance, which claimed over 50 innocent lives. These disturbing trends are even discernible during the on-going global fight against the deadly COVID infection, which has regrettably been accompanied by a tsunami of 'infodemic' and 'hate pandemic'.

Secondly, digital space has become incubators of radicalization as well as amplifiers of hatred, intolerance, discrimination and violence against individuals and groups, on the basis of religion, ethnicity, race, color and nationality. The algorithm decision-making processes unfortunately mirror real-time structural discrimination and xenophobic sentiments.

Thirdly, the advancement in digital platforms and social media applications has outpaced the natural evolution of international discourse on freedom of opinion and expression. As a result, the global human rights landscape is now more complex than ten years ago with the emergence of new actors such as social media companies, requiring stronger vertical and horizontal collaboration within and among public and private sectors.

Given these transformational shifts, Pakistan calls for enhanced dialogue and cooperation to reinforce the special duties, responsibilities, nuances and regulations that are germane to the freedom of expression and opinion, in line with ICCPR's Articles 19 (3) and 20 and other applicable international human rights instruments.



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It is with these considerations that Pakistan participated constructively in the discussions on the draft resolution, and endeavored to align the draft text with contemporary realities.

We appreciate the core group's constructive engagement and willingness to listen and accommodate diverse perspectives.

Pakistan is therefore pleased to join consensus on the draft resolution and encourages the Council members to take due cognizance of the dangers and risks associated with the abuse of this fundamental right and the attendant implications for the international human rights agenda.

I thank you.