



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN

Geneva

National Statement, delivered by Mr. Muhammad Hussain, Counsellor, during Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on Hazardous wastes at the 45th session of Human Rights Council

(18 September 2020)

Mr. President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his report.

Pakistan reiterates that human rights are universal and everyone has the same right to safe and healthy work, regardless of income, age, gender, ethnicity, race, religion or status. It is the responsibility of the States to ensure that its people are protected from exposure to all hazardous substance.

In this regard, the SR's report (document A/HRC/45/12) provides some useful insights on links between human rights obligations of a country and its efforts to prevent the exposure of its citizens to corona virus.

The SR rightly identifies that exposure to COVID-19 is linked with people's rights to life, dignity and health, which are perennially threatened by global trends relating to deforestation, biodiversity-collapse and climate change. As we strive to eliminate COVID-19 and prevent future pandemics, it remains essential to address deficits in human rights and negative trends relating to biodiversity and climate change.

The risks of harm by hazardous wastes and environment increase many folds in case of vulnerable segments of society especially the migrants, minorities and persons with disabilities. The rights of workers in global supply chains need to be protected. We urge earnest implementation of SR's specific recommendations made to the business enterprises in his report.

Pakistan's experience of flattening the COVID curve in the country is rooted in adopting a two-fold humanist approach: One, the policy of smart lockdowns to preserve lives and livelihoods; two, the Ehsaas (Compassion) Programme of providing cash assistance to the most vulnerable segments to shore up their incomes, healthcare and nutrition. Our health-workers and healthcare system also rose to the occasion.

We ask the Special Rapporteur if he can briefly elaborate on deficiencies exposed by COVID pandemic in international legal framework in the areas of human rights, environment and health.

Thank you.