

**Statement of Pakistan at the 2020 Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS) of the
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**

“Reinforcing humanitarian assistance in the context of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations: taking action for people-centered solutions, strengthening effectiveness, respecting international humanitarian law and promoting the humanitarian principles”

9-12 June 2020

**Mr. Chair,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me begin by congratulating Morocco for its efforts to convene this year’s Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS) in virtual format despite the current challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also thank the Secretary General and UN OCHA for their insightful briefings.

Mr. Chair,

We are currently undergoing an unprecedented time in history. The dire humanitarian situation, which was already under stress in 2020, has been exacerbated by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Affecting developing and developed countries alike, the pandemic has overwhelmed health systems, adversely impacting economies and societies to a virtual standstill. The humanitarian aspect of the pandemic is worsened by the presence of prolonged conflicts, food insecurity, disruption of supply chains, climate change and a combination of a global economic slowdown and rising levels of debt.

The ongoing humanitarian emergency, triggered by the pandemic, is also a stark reminder that no country can overcome such threats alone. A “global” challenge requires a “global” response, which is firmly rooted in solidarity, international cooperation and respect for multilateralism as enshrined in the landmark UNGA resolution 46/182 on humanitarian assistance and coordination.

We hope that the Humanitarian Affairs Segment this year would help us in formulating effective approaches to address the challenge ahead of us.

Mr. Chair,

Located in a region where two of our immediate neighbors were severely impacted by COVID-19 during the initial phase of the pandemic, Pakistan undertook a number of early measures to mitigate its spread and address its effects.

A robust institutional mechanism was set up under the National Security Committee (NSC) and National Coordination Committee (NCC) to ensure a unified response. Wide-ranging measures were introduced to check the spread of the virus. These included imposition of smart lockdowns, international travel restrictions, school and university closures, cancellation of public events, localized quarantines, strengthening of country-wide health response and

varying levels of lockdown in cities across the country. Screening and testing, surveillance of cases and launching of an information campaign to raise awareness among general public have also helped our timely response.

It is only recently that the Government has eased some of these restrictions as the economic cost of an indefinite lockdown was not sustainable. It was also feared that any prolonged lockdown would have caused an even greater humanitarian crisis triggered by hunger and unemployment in the country.

While our cases are currently on the rise, the Government's strategy has so far proved to slow the spread of the virus and managed to mitigate its impact. Despite the relative success, a serious threat continues to loom as the WHO has warned that the cases may peak in South Asia in the next two months.

Mr. Chair,

In order to address the social and economic impact of the pandemic, the Prime Minister of Pakistan has launched a package of \$ 8 billion for vulnerable groups covering relief measures for daily wage workers, low-income families, financial support for SMEs, support for health and food supplies and fuel prices, and procurement of emergency services.

The government has also announced an emergency cash assistance initiative benefiting the most vulnerable refugee families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Chair,

The scale of the challenge is such that the national responses alone would not be fully effective unless complemented by strong international cooperation and mobilization of much needed resources.

While the pandemic is first and foremost a health crisis, its social, economic and humanitarian impacts are much more far-reaching. This has exposed the fragility of our societies and economies to shocks, laying bare deep inequalities that threaten the achievement of the SDGs.

For developing countries there are additional challenges as remittance flows to low and middle-income countries are expected to shrink by 20 % this year - equivalent to \$110 billion – just as direct foreign investment in these countries is also expected to decline by a third. In view of the pandemic's socio-economic impacts on developing countries, Prime Minister Imran Khan has launched a "Global Initiative on Debt Relief" which aims to seek urgent debt relief for low- and middle-income countries.

Developing countries must be supported in overcoming the massive impact of COVID-19 by providing fiscal space and financial relief to manage the unfolding crisis.

Mr. Chair,

As for meeting the immediate humanitarian needs, the Government of Pakistan has launched "*Pakistan's Preparedness and Response Plan*" (PPRP), worth US \$ 595 million, in a bid to

strengthen Pakistan's capacity in emergency prevention, preparedness, response and build health systems for a period of 9 months from April to December 2020.

We are now reaching out to international partners, relevant UN agencies and donors to reduce the social and financial impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable people in the country by providing the strongest possible support to the response plan.

In this regard, we would like to thank UN OCHA for including Pakistan in the updated "Global Humanitarian Response Plan" (GHRP) for Covid-19. The assistance provided under GHRP would greatly help in combating the immediate health and humanitarian impacts of the pandemic on the most vulnerable.

Mr. Chair,

Our efforts to fight COVID-19 and its humanitarian impact must not remain oblivious to challenges posed by the pandemic in situations of protracted conflicts, foreign occupation and alien domination.

In the wake of the pandemic, the people of Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir, who were already reeling under a 10 months digital and physical lockdown, have been denied adequate access to medical supplies and facilities and high-speed internet, making it difficult to deal with the virus. Hundreds of Kashmiri political leaders and abducted youth continue to languish in crowded jails across India, making them vulnerable to the virus. In blatant violation of international humanitarian law, the Indian government has also denied access to all UN and non-UN humanitarian agencies and civil society organizations.

While the world's attention was riveted on combating the Covid-19 virus, India has taken further steps, almost by stealth, to change the demography of occupied Jammu and Kashmir by promulgating new "domicile" regulations that would enable settlers from all over India to colonize the occupied State in violation of Security Council resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Defying the UN Secretary General's global call for ceasefire, India has also intensified its violations of the ceasefire along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir and the "Working Boundary". Since 1 January 2020, India has committed more than 1000 unprovoked ceasefire violations and has deliberately targeted innocent civilians on the Pakistan side of the Line of Control, killing 6 and injuring 82 civilians.

In flagrant violation of Article 28 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, India has frequently placed its artillery guns within crowded Kashmiri villages, using them as human shields, to avoid Pakistani retaliation for its ceasefire violations.

The worsening humanitarian situation in IOJK calls for international community's intervention by holding India accountable for its clear grave breaches of international humanitarian law and war crimes.

Mr. Chairman

In conclusion, the scale of the humanitarian crisis triggered by COVID-19 must be matched by the magnitude of our response, which must be large-scale, innovative and coordinated.

A holistic response to COVID-19 must incorporate broader humanitarian considerations such as respect for international humanitarian law and principles, financing for United Nations' humanitarian agencies; provision of "liquidity" and necessary fiscal space for large refugee hosting countries; ensuring smooth functioning of global food supply chains, debt relief and restructuring for developing countries, unimpeded humanitarian access in situations impacted by protracted conflicts, immediate provision of medicines and equipment; and ceasing of any hostilities or conflict.

We welcome the discussions that are taking place this week on key humanitarian issues, including the impact of COVID-19, and we remain committed to working to address humanitarian needs – now and in the longer-term – together.

I thank you all.
