



Opening Remarks by His Excellency Ambassador Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to United Nations in New York, at the SDG 16 Conference 2021

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Excellencies, Under-Secretary General, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to participate in this conference on “Transforming Governance for a more Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Future: SDG 16 as the roadmap to respond to COVID-19 and Build Back Better”.

It is significant that the SDGs incorporated “peace, justice, and an inclusive future” as integral to the realization of the rest of the SDGs.

Peace and development are interdependent. The concept of peace is enshrined and elaborated in the UN Charter and international law, including international humanitarian law. Peace is challenged firstly by inter-state conflicts and disputes. The preservation of international peace and security is the primary responsibility of the Security Council, the General Assembly, and other related mechanisms.

The United Nations continues to play a vital role in preserving and promoting international peace and security including through conflict resolution, mediation, UN peacekeeping, and adherence to the principles of the UN Charter: the non-use of force, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, non-interference in their internal affairs, and the exercise of the right of self-determination by peoples.

Peace is also often disrupted within states, for a variety of reasons. The underlying causes include poverty and underdevelopment, conflicts over scarce resources, environmental degradation, and weak governance. In many instances, such internal challenges are exacerbated by external factors. In such situations, the concerned countries can be assisted to restore peace and stability through international support and development cooperation. The work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund have a vital role in helping countries which are emerging from conflicts.

Such support is especially essential in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic which has exacerbated poverty and inequality among and within countries. The recently concluded Financing for Development Forum Outcome Document has identified a set of important measures to extend financial and other support to the developing countries. The work being



done by IDLO to assist the Least Developed Countries to attract investment in sustainable development projects is one example of such support.

The goal of promoting justice, under SDG-16, also encompasses the international and national dimensions. Justice flows from equality and injustice from inequality, discrimination, and lack of fairness in policy and practice. As the Secretary-General has stated, “Inequality is the hallmark of our times”.

In promoting the goal of justice, it is vital to address inequality at the international and national levels.

To this end, at the international level we must work towards an inclusive and equitable global financial architecture, a fair and inclusive international tax regime, an equitable and development-oriented trade regime, an end to illicit financial outflows from developing countries, and the reform and return of their stolen assets.

At the national level, the United Nations can extend assistance to countries to promote justice, adherence to the rule of law, and good governance. This can be extended in particular to countries emerging from conflict and where judicial institutions have collapsed. However, elsewhere, such assistance should be extended at the request of the governments of the concerned countries. Moreover, it is not self-evident that such assistance and advice is required only by developing countries. There are numerous situations in certain advanced countries where inequality and discrimination, especially against minorities and immigrants, requires redress and a greater adherence to the principles of international law and human rights.

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.

I thank you.