



ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN and President of the Economic and Social Council during Special Session of the General Assembly in response to the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Pandemic

New York, December 3, 2020

I am honoured to be able to speak to the General Assembly's Special Session in response to the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

The crisis triggered by the COVID-19 is a health crisis, an economic crisis and above all a humanitarian crisis.

Global infections have reached 65 million. One and a half million people have died. We have lost one of our own, Ambassador Toure, the Charge d' Affaires of Guinea. I would like to take this opportunity to express, my deepest condolences to his family and the Government of Guinea.

The economic statistics are equally devastating.

- A global economic contraction of nearly 5%;
- over 60 developing countries need urgent financial help;
- Five countries have defaulted on debt payments;

- Twenty countries face acute food insecurity and scarcity;
- Over 300 million jobs lost;
- A 100 million people pushed back into extreme poverty;

Confronted by this monumental crisis, the world's response must be equally bold.

We must first ensure that a vaccine against the virus becomes available to everyone, everywhere, rich or poor, man or woman, on an equitable basis. Those who are the most at risk – health workers, the ill and infirm – women and children must receive priority.

Advance Purchase Agreements (APAs) for the virus must not be allowed to undermine our collective commitment to equity in vaccine distribution. A collective global commitment to the COVAX and C-TAP facility is indispensable.

Governments must also commit to transparency in all matters related to the production, distribution and fair pricing of the vaccine.

Second, each government should be encouraged to respond to the peoples' needs. As the Managing Director of the IMF has advised, countries should spend as much as needed to keep their people alive and their economies afloat.

It is evident that the developing countries do not have the fiscal space to finance a recovery from the pandemic.

Later in this session, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Imran Khan, will propose an emergency plan for financial support to the developing countries.

If there is an economic collapse or a humanitarian disaster in the developing countries, it will halt a global economic recovery and the achievement of the SDGs will turn into a chimera.

In deploying resources, governments and international institutions must put people first. No one should be left behind.

To lift millions out of poverty and build resilience in our societies, investments in sustainable infrastructure will be vital.

Science and technology must be deployed in “building back better”.

Research and development objectives, the International patent regime and the digitalization of economies should be aligned with the SDGs and climate objectives.

I am confident that this Special Session will contribute significantly to the achievement of these important objectives.

I am also confident that ECOSOC, through its forthcoming Forum on Financing for Development next April, the Forum on Science and Technology and Innovation in May, and the High-Level Political Forum in July, will complement and advance the deliberations and outcomes of this Special Session to build resilience structures that can recover from the COVID crisis, achieve the SDGs and prevent a climate catastrophe.

This is a time for the expression of International solidarity. This is a time for us to turn our nice words into concrete and specific actions.