

**Opening Segment of the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations  
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific  
(UNESCAP)  
(26 April 2021)**

**Statement by the Prime Minister of Pakistan**

**Executive Secretary,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We are in the midst of an unprecedented global crisis unleashed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen its devastating health and socio-economic impacts all around the world, with Asia and the Pacific also bearing the brunt.

Pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities have become even more acute. We are now lagging further behind in achieving the SDGs than ever before. Over 100 million people will fall back into extreme poverty.

It might take years to regain the pre-COVID income levels. Varying financial capacities, health care and vaccine rollout may lead to uneven recovery among countries and regions.

We must ensure that no one is left behind. That requires international solidarity. We need the right mix of national actions, regional collaboration, and multilateral cooperation.

I would suggest four key areas of focus:

*First*, we have to put the people front and centre for pro-poor and inclusive policies. We need to strengthen public health and social protection systems. These have been the primary objectives for us in Pakistan. People-centred economic security is now at the core of our development paradigm.

*Second*, peace and development must be anchored in human rights, which should be upheld and protected universally. The international community needs to pay special attention to situations of foreign occupation.

*Third*, in building back we have the opportunity to model our economies on more resilient and sustainable grounds. Ambitious climate action is a way ahead. Pakistan is accordingly implementing policies for green growth.

*Fourth*, there is a dire need to mobilize adequate financing for development. For the developing countries, the debt issue must be addressed in a fair and sustainable manner. With my “Global Initiative on Debt Relief”, Pakistan has been advocating this cause on all world forums. At home, we are implementing corresponding fiscal reforms.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The bigger question is: what mechanisms can help us achieve these ambitious goals? We all want to reinvigorate our economies and build back better. But we cannot do that in isolation.

Only through enhanced regional and international cooperation can we reopen safely and sustainably, starting with equitable access to affordable vaccines for all.

We have to think in the long term, keeping in mind the best interest of our future generations.

Pakistan has shifted its focus from geo-politics to geo-economics. We are ready to join hands for win-win outcomes. Our success lies in cooperative multilateralism and partnerships. Let Asia-Pacific take the lead. Pakistan is willing to work with all members to advance our shared objectives.

**I thank you.**