

**Statement by the Prime Minister of Pakistan H.E. Imran Khan to
the Seventy-sixth Session of the UN General Assembly
(24 September 2021)**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

Mr. President,

I congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the 76th session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to express appreciation for the significant achievements of your predecessor, Volkan Bozkir, who guided the Assembly skilfully under the difficult circumstances imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr. President,

The world is facing triple challenge of the Covid-19, the accompanying economic crisis, and the threats posed by climate change.

The virus does not discriminate between nations and people. Nor do the catastrophes imposed by uncertain weather patterns.

The common threats faced by us today not only expose the fragility of the international system; they also underscore the oneness of humanity.

By the grace of Almighty Allah, Pakistan has been successful so far in containing the Covid pandemic. Our calibrated strategy of ‘smart lockdowns’ helped save lives and livelihoods and kept the economy afloat. Over 15 million families survived through our social protection programme of Ehsaas.

Mr. President,

Climate change is one of the primary existential threats that our planet faces today.

Pakistan's contribution to global emissions is negligible. Yet we are among the 10 most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change in the world.

Being fully aware of our global responsibilities, we have embarked upon game-changing environmental programmes: reforesting Pakistan through our 10 billion tree tsunami; preserving natural habitats; switching to renewable energy; removing pollution from our cities; and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

To address the triple crisis of covid pandemic, economic downturn, and climate emergency, we need a comprehensive strategy that should include:

One, vaccine equity: everyone, everywhere, must be vaccinated against Covid, and as soon as possible;

Two, adequate financing must be made available to developing countries. This can be ensured through comprehensive debt restructuring; expanded ODA; redistribution of unutilized SDRs, and allotment of a greater proportion of SDRs to developing countries; and finally, provision of climate finance; and

Three, we must adopt clear investment strategies which help alleviate poverty, promote job creation, build sustainable infrastructure, and of course bridge the digital divide.

I propose that the Secretary-General convene an SDG summit in 2025 to review and accelerate implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Mr. President,

Because of the plunder of the developing world by their corrupt ruling elites, the gap between the rich and the poor countries is increasing at an alarming speed.

Through this platform, I have been drawing the world's attention towards the scourge of illicit financial flows from developing countries.

The Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity (FACTI) has calculated that a staggering 7 trillion dollars in stolen assets are parked in the financial "haven" destinations.

This organized theft and illegal transfer of assets has profound consequences for the developing nations. It depletes their already meagre resources, accentuates the levels of poverty especially when laundered money puts pressure on the currency and leads to its devaluation. At the current rate, when the FACTI Panel estimates that a trillion dollar every year is taken out of the developing world, there will be mass exodus of economic migrants towards the richer nations.

What the East India Company did to India, the crooked ruling elites are doing to developing world - plundering the wealth and transferring to western capitals and offshore tax havens.

And Mr. President, retrieving the stolen assets from the developed countries is impossible for poor nations. The rich countries have no incentives, or compulsion, to return this ill-gotten wealth, and this ill-gotten wealth belongs to the masses of the developing world. I foresee, in the not-too-distant future a time will come when the rich countries will be forced to build walls to keep out economic migrants from these poor countries.

I fear a few “wealthy islands” in the sea of poverty will also turn into a global calamity, like climate change.

The General Assembly must take steps meaningfully to address this deeply disturbing, and morally repugnant, situation. Naming and shaming the ‘haven’ destinations and developing a comprehensive legal framework to halt and reverse the illicit financial flows are most critical actions to stop this grave economic injustice.

And at a minimum, the recommendations of Secretary General's FACTI panel should be fully implemented.

Mr. President,

Islamophobia is another pernicious phenomenon that we all need to collectively combat.

In the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks, terrorism has been associated with Islam by some quarters. This has increased the tendency of right-wing, xenophobic and violent nationalists, extremists and terrorist groups to target Muslims.

The UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy has recognized these emerging threats. We hope the Secretary-General’s report will focus on these new threats of terrorism posed by Islamophobes and right-wing extremists.

I call on the Secretary-General to convene a global dialogue on countering the rise of Islamophobia. Our parallel efforts, at the same time, should be to promote interfaith harmony, and they should continue.

Mr. President,

The worst and most pervasive form of Islamophobia now rules India. The hate-filled ‘Hindutva’ ideology, propagated by the fascist RSS-BJP regime, has unleashed a reign of fear and violence against India’s 200 million strong Muslim community. Mob lynching by cow vigilantes; frequent pogroms, such as the one in New Delhi last year; discriminatory citizenship laws to purge India of Muslims; and a campaign to destroy mosques across India and obliterate its Muslim heritage and history, are all part of this criminal enterprise.

New Delhi has also embarked on what it ominously calls the “final solution” for the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. It has undertaken:

- A series of illegal and unilateral measures in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir since 5th August 2019;
- It has unleashed a reign of terror by an occupation force of 900,000;
- It has jailed senior Kashmiri leadership;
- Imposed a clampdown on media and internet;
- Violently suppressed peaceful protests;
- Abducted 13,000 young Kashmiris and tortured hundreds of them;
- It has extra-judicially killed hundreds of innocent Kashmiris in fake “encounters”; and
- Imposed collective punishments by destroying entire neighbourhoods and villages.

We have unveiled a detailed dossier on gross and systematic violations of human rights by the Indian Security Forces in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

This repression is accompanied by illegal efforts to change the demographic structure of the occupied territory, and transform it from a Muslim majority into a Muslim minority.

Indian actions violate the resolutions of the UN Security Council on Jammu and Kashmir. The resolutions clearly prescribe that the “final disposition” of the disputed territory should be decided by its people, through a free and impartial plebiscite held under the UN auspices.

India’s actions in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir also violate International Human Rights and Humanitarian Laws, including the 4th Geneva Convention, and amount to “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity.”

It is unfortunate, very unfortunate, that the world’s approach to violations of human rights lacks even-handedness, and even is selective. Geopolitical considerations, or corporate interests, commercial interests often compel major powers to overlook the transgressions of their “affiliated” countries.

Such double standards are the most glaring in case of India, where this RSS-BJP regime is being allowed to get away with human rights abuses with complete impunity.

The most recent example of Indian barbarity was the forcible snatching of the mortal remains of the great Kashmiri leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, from his family, denying him a proper Islamic funeral and burial, in accordance with his wishes and Muslim traditions.

Devoid of any legal or moral sanction, this action was even against the basic norms of human decency. I call on this General Assembly to demand that Syed Geelani’s mortal remains be allowed to be buried in the “cemetery of martyrs” with the appropriate Islamic rites.

Mr. President,

Pakistan desires peace with India, as with all its neighbours. But sustainable peace in South Asia is contingent upon resolution of the

Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, and the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

Last February, we reaffirmed the 2003 ceasefire understanding along the Line of Control. The hope was that it would lead to a rethink of the strategy in New Delhi. Sadly, the BJP government has intensified repression in Kashmir and continues to vitiate the environment by these barbaric acts.

The onus remains on India to create a conducive environment for meaningful and result-oriented engagement with Pakistan. And for that, it must do:

One, reverse its unilateral and illegal measures instituted since 5th August 2019;

Two, stop its oppression and human rights violations against the people of Kashmir; and

Three, halt and reverse the demographic changes in the occupied territory.

It is also essential to prevent another conflict between Pakistan and India. India's military build-up, development of advanced nuclear weapons, and acquisition of destabilising conventional capabilities, can erode mutual deterrence between the two countries.

And now Mr. President, I want to talk about Afghanistan. For the current situation in Afghanistan, for some reason, Pakistan has been blamed for the turn of events, by politicians in the United States and some politicians in Europe.

From this platform, I want them all to know, the country that suffered the most, apart from Afghanistan, was Pakistan, when we joined the US War on Terror after 9/11.

80,000 Pakistanis died. \$150 billion dollars were lost to our economy. There were 3.5 million internally displaced Pakistanis. And why did this happen? In the 1980s, Pakistan was a front-line state in fighting against the occupation of Afghanistan. Pakistan and the United States trained Mujahideen groups to fight for the liberation of Afghanistan. Amongst those Mujahideen groups was Al-Qaeda, various groups from all over the world. There were Mujahideen, Afghan Mujahideen. These were considered heroes.

President Ronald Regan invited them to the White House in 1983. And according to a news item, he compared them to the founding fathers of the United States. They were heroes.

Come 1989, the Soviets leave, and so do the Americans - abandoning Afghanistan. Pakistan was left with 5 million Afghan refugees. We were left with sectarian militant groups which were never existed before. But the worse cut of it was, that a year later Pakistan was sanctioned by the US. We felt used.

Fast forward 9/11, Pakistan is needed again by the US, because now the US-led coalition was invading Afghanistan, and it could not happen without Pakistan providing all the logistical support.

What happened after that?

The same Mujahideen that we had trained, that fighting foreign occupation was a sacred duty, a holy war or jihad, turned against us.

We were called collaborators.

They declared jihad on us. Then all along the tribal belt bordering Afghanistan - Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal belt - where no Pakistan army had been there since our independence, people had strong sympathies with the Afghan Taliban, not because of their religious ideology but because of Pashtun nationalism, which is very strong. Then there are three million Afghan refugees still in Pakistan all Pashtoons, living in the camps. 500,000 in the biggest camp, 100,000 camps. They all had affinity and sympathy with the Afghan Taliban.

So, what happened? They too turned against Pakistan. For the first time we had militant Taliban in Pakistan. And they too attacked the Government of Pakistan. When our Army went into the tribal areas first time in our history - whenever an army goes into the civilian areas, there is collateral damage - so, there was collateral damage, which multiplied the militants to seek revenge. But not just that. The world must know that in Pakistan there were 480 drone attacks conducted by the US. And we all know that the drone attacks are not that precise. They cause more collateral damage than the militants they are targeting.

So, people whose relatives had been killed sought revenge against Pakistan. Between 2004 and 2014, there were 50 different militant groups attacking the State of Pakistan.

At one point, people, people like us were worried, that will we survive this? There were bombs going all over Pakistan. Our capital was like a fortress.

Had it not been for one of the most disciplined army in the world and one of the best intelligence agencies in the world, I think Pakistan would have gone down.

So, when we hear this at the end. There is a lot of worry in the US about taking care of the interpreters and everyone who helped the US.

What about us?

The only reason we suffered so much was because we became an ally of the US - of the Coalition - in the war in Afghanistan. There were attacks being conducted from the Afghan soil into Pakistan. At least there should have been a word of appreciation. But rather than appreciation, imagine how we feel when we are blamed for the turn of events in Afghanistan.

After 2006, it became clear to everyone who understood Afghanistan and its history that there would be no military solution in Afghanistan. I went to the US, I spoke to thinktanks, I met the then Senator Biden, Senator John Kerry, Senator Harry Reid – I tried to explain to them that there would not be any military solution, and political settlement was the way forward. No one understood then.

And unfortunately, in trying to force a military solution is where the US went wrong. And if today, the world needs to know why the Taliban are back in power, all it has to do is to do a deep analysis of why a 300,000 strong well equipped Afghan army – and remember Afghans are one of the bravest nations on earth - gave up without a fight.

The moment a deep analysis of this is done, the world would know why the Taliban came back to power and it is not because of Pakistan.

Mr. President,

Now the whole international community should think what is the way ahead. There are two paths that we can take. If we neglect Afghanistan right now, according to the UN half the people of Afghanistan are already vulnerable, and by next year almost 90% of the people in Afghanistan will go below the poverty line. There is a huge humanitarian crisis looming ahead. And this will have serious repercussions not just for the neighbours of Afghanistan but everywhere. A destabilized, chaotic Afghanistan will again become a safe haven for

international terrorists - the reason why the US came to Afghanistan in the first place.

Therefore, there is only one way to go. We must strengthen and stabilize the current government, for the sake of the people of Afghanistan.

What have the Taliban promised?

They will respect human rights.

They will have an inclusive government.

They will not allow their soil to be used by terrorist.

And they have given amnesty.

If the world community incentivises them, and encourages them to walk this talk, it will be a win-win situation for everyone. Because these are the four conditions that the US-Taliban dialogue in Doha was all about.

If the world can incentivise them to go this direction, then this twenty-year presence of the coalition forces in Afghanistan would not be wasted after all. Because the Afghan soil would not be used by the international terrorists.

I end Mr. President, by urging everyone that this is a critical time for Afghanistan.

You cannot waste time. Help is needed there. Humanitarian assistance has to be given there immediately. The Secretary General of the United Nations has taken bold steps. I urge you to mobilize the international community, and move in this direction.

Thank you.