



**Statement by the Pakistan Prime Minister, at the International
Conference on a Climate Resilient Pakistan
(Geneva, 9 January 2023)**

BISMILLAH HIR-RAHMAN-IR-RAHEEM

**H.E Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations,**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, let me take this opportunity to express my profoundest gratitude to the Secretary-General for co-hosting this Conference with me, for consistently being Pakistan's voice and sympathetic friend throughout the great calamity that my nation suffered this summer.

We are, forever, grateful for your moral clarity and leadership in this time of existential crisis. I am also grateful to so many heads of states and governments, as well as ministers, and other partners who have joined us today.

Excellencies,

We are at a turning point in world history. An era of great change is sweeping over our lives and countries, faster than we can imagine. If all of us are to survive, let alone thrive, some far-reaching decisions have to be made at the multilateral level, far greater than the interventions made after the Second World War.

Like many developing countries, Pakistan too has been caught in the cross-hairs of a series of cascading global crises: the COVID-19 pandemic, the global financial crunch, and the egregious impacts of conflict in Eastern Europe. Which is why, before this summer, Pakistan was already confronted with a crippling series of food, fuel and economic crises, and was compelled to seek external support, including from the IMF and Multilateral Development Banks.

But, it is the catastrophic floods of 2022 that have tipped us over a perilous edge. This new unexpected shock, to our entire system, has brought a combination of complex and quantum challenges in its wake.

At the heart of the perfect storm of problems lies this prolonged exposure to a monsoon on steroids, as aptly described by the Secretary General. In

a matter of two months, the ground beneath our feet was literally, physically taken away. The tsunami from the sky left 33 million affected and displaced 8 million, killing over 1,700 and injuring thousands, and destroying more than 2 million homes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ferocity of the flowing water damaged over 8,000 km of roads, 3,127 km of railway track. This calamity has led to the complete collapse of health and education services in the most affected areas. Education has been disrupted for 2.6 million students, including one million girls. One can go on about the records broken by this disaster, but we are in a race against time.

This is Pakistan's harshest winter, not in terms of celsius or fahrenheit, but a peninsula of large-scale suffering where the water still stands, and millions still cannot see beyond the cold misery of homelessness.

Excellencies,

We are very grateful for the generous support extended to my country by the United Nations, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the IMF, and the European Union as well as many friendly countries. However, relief work is yet not over, especially, in parts of Sindh and Balochistan, where the flood water still needs to be drained, to reclaim the agricultural land to grow food, to build homes, reconstruct infrastructure and rehabilitate institutions and services. The number of people suffering from food insecurity is expected to have doubled from 7 to 14 million populations.

Excellencies,

You will appreciate that we need to give 33 million people their future back. Today's convening is an attempt to give my people another chance at getting back on their feet.

Last October, in collaboration with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UNDP, and the European Union, we prepared a Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) that calculated the total destruction and economic losses from the floods to exceed USD 30 billion, 8 percent of Pakistan's GDP, pushing nine million people into extreme poverty.

This brings me to the recovery challenge. Apart from the scale of human tragedy, which you all heard about and witnessed, the life-lines to economic growth, fiscal space, and development gains that we so badly needed to manage our public finance and growth trajectories were all reversed, rather wiped out in a series of exogenous crises I just spoke about.

Excellencies,

The Pakistani nation as well as the state has responded courageously to this catastrophe. Those who had little, came forward to help those who had lost all they had. Millions volunteered to feed, clothe and shelter their unfortunate brothers and sisters.

Twenty thousand troops, hundreds of helicopters, aircrafts and motorboats were mobilized for round-the-clock rescue operations. They saved thousands of lives and quickly restored disrupted communications.

All resilience funds were repurposed to provide cash grants of over US\$ 400 million to more than 2.7 million households. Despite our acute financial constraints, we mobilized around US \$ 575 million for the emergency, including the UN flash appeal.

Excellencies,

The one lesson we have learnt is that nothing can go back to business-as-usual. Tough choices will continue to be made, and I am painfully aware that taxonomy of harder reforms will make lives on the Pakistani streets and villages harsher than ever before.

But the scale of the resource gap for funding crisis-recovery is so wide that it has redefined how we think about resilience. Frankly, it has changed life forever.

Building on the Post Disaster Needs Assessment, and with the support from our development partners, my government has prepared a comprehensive framework plan for recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction with resilience. Its broad contours are set out in the 4RF document that will be presented to you in the next session of the Conference.

The document identifies the priority areas and objectives for rehabilitation and reconstruction, whilst also mapping out the programmes and projects that will be implemented in the critical sectors in the short, medium and long terms, accompanied by a financing plan and institutional arrangements.

The first part of the 4RF plan reflects the priorities for recovery and reconstruction, bearing in mind the minimum funding requirement of US\$ 16.3 billion – half of which is proposed to be met from domestic resources and the other half from our development partners.

The second part of the Framework Plan incorporates flood resilience in the design of existing and planned infrastructure projects – such as protecting key highways, the main railway line network, the ten-year Flood Protection Plan, as well as an early warning system and buffering of, the infrastructure and capacity for rescue and relief in future disasters. Our funding gap for minimum recovery is \$ USD 8 billion and will be needed over the span of three years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Transparency and oversight tools are critical for any optimal usage of resources. Waste, delays, and poor auditing capacity create blockages we can ill afford. That is why I have insisted that the 4RF Plan also includes an independent oversight board, a third-party monitoring mechanism, and a grievance and redressal process to ensure efficiency, and transparency in the implementation of the Plan.

Excellencies,

It is clear that Pakistan's ability to recover from the colossal flood disaster, to restore critical infrastructure and revive rapid economic growth will hinge, substantially, on the speed of these actions. And the most important link in this chain will be financial resourcing. If that gap continues to obstruct our recovery and minimum resilience needs, the results may be too catastrophic to imagine.

This Conference is not just about helping to rebuild the lives and livelihoods of the people affected by global crises. We, too, are learning how to walk this changed landscape in more than one ways.

It is, in fact, about the solidarity and vision needed to ensure the world's transition to a sustainable future, not just on paper or powerpoint, but on the ground, in schools, businesses, and homes.

Even as we plan for a future of resilience, the shocks that disasters bring can never be wholly accounted for. But resilient societies look for the light of opportunity in the darkness of disaster. It is precisely this kind of strategic re-set that I am trying to kick-start today, in seeking your support for a recovery plan for the people of Pakistan who are, by nature, very resilient.

I know these are times of extreme economic hardships in many countries. But Pakistan needs a new Coalition of the Willing, one that can save lives and put them on a path to responsible global citizenship.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What I am asking of you is more than a rebooting of your compassion for humanitarian relief needs. Today, I am asking for your support for those who have lost their life's savings, their homes and livelihoods, those who are sitting under blue sky, facing the harshest of winters and looking forward to you for help.

I am asking for a sustained international support plan to meet this daunting challenge. I am asking for a new life-line for people who need to power our economy and re-enter the 21st century with a future that is protected from such extreme risks to human security. Together, we have to rebuild their lives and their dreams.

Your solidarity and long-term support to the people of Pakistan at this critical point will make the difference between staying unprepared, or facing the future with renewed hope.

I thank you, once again, for your support in this Conference today. Your solidarity will always be remembered by the people of Pakistan.