



**Statement by Press Counsellor, Dr. Mariam Shaikh
during the General Debate of the Fourth Committee
[Item 50 “Questions related to Information”
(20th October 2022)]**

Mr. Chair,

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Group of 77 and China.

2. My delegation appreciates the efforts of Ms. Melissa Fleming, Under-Secretary- General for Global Communication for her skillful leadership & for the presentation on the report of the Secretary General on Questions relating to information.

Mr. Chair,

3. Pakistan is one of the most climate vulnerable countries in the world. In the last two decades, recurrent spells of extreme weather events have taken a heavy toll on both life and property and adversely affected Pakistan's economic growth. Recent floods are one such example.

4. Pakistan appreciates the fact that the United Nations was not only among the first responders but also a key advocate of the Climate justice recognizing the disproportionate impacts of climate change on low-income developing countries like Pakistan. Pakistan also warmly appreciates the Secretary General's continued support; and USG for Global Communications' renewed pledge to continue to advocate loud for massive financial support, and justice, in this regard.

5. We appreciate the support of the Department extended for the exhibit by Pakistan on Floods, during the high-level week of the 77th Session of the General Assembly. We hope that United Nations communications will continue to respond to a broad range of emerging or ongoing crises resulting from Climate change calling for global solidarity.

Mr. Chair,

6. Disinformation has emerged as a global pandemic in this Information age. The disinformation operations via cyber-meddling did not stop after EU Disinfo Lab's groundbreaking revelations and comprehensive evidence of targeting the UN bodies, its member states, core institutions and core values.

7. As rightly identified in the Secretary General's report on disinformation pursuant to the resolution 76/227, Countering the different manifestations of disinformation that arise in different contexts, including in relation to electoral processes, public health, armed conflict, minority rights and climate change, poses a multiplicity of challenges. Driven by an ambition to malign and diplomatically isolate 'enemy' through all means necessary, some individuals, groups, as well States compromise their own intellectual credibility and journalistic ideals, consequently threatening stability, and peaceful co-existence.

8. Like many other countries, Pakistan, and our people, has been the victims of targeted campaigns of disinformation. Among other manifestation of disinformation campaigns, a critical concern is the state-sponsored disinformation in armed conflict and situations of foreign occupation.

9. Often occupying forces impose a wall-of-silence with a physical lockdown, a total information blackout, and censorship and surveillance to suppress the voice of the people, routinely incarcerating, beating, humiliating, harassing and even killing, for reporting on the human rights violations. Pakistan also expresses serious concern at attacks and violence against journalists and media workers and associated personnel in such illegally occupied territories. This remains one of the greatest challenges to the safety of journalists.

10. DGC should enhance public awareness about disinformation in such critical contexts where disinformation is used as a tool to promote a distorted image of legitimate freedom struggles, and have a devastating impact on human rights, the rule of law, and ultimately serve to perpetuate and prolong the conflict.

Mr. Chair,

11. We all acknowledge that hate speech, erodes the shared values of humanity, impacts social stability, triggers violent conflicts, impedes the achievement of sustainable development and seriously poisons the international community's cooperation to meet global challenges. In the internet era, hate speech spreads fast with wide ranging and profound impacts, which is all the more reason for the international community to pay great attention to it. Racist rhetoric has heightened hate crimes.

12. Islamophobia is a reality. Its manifestations - hate speech, discrimination, and violence against Muslims- are proliferating in several parts of the world constituting grave violations of human rights and religious freedom.

13. Against this backdrop, expanding the reach of verified campaign by the DGC to these core issues such as climate change and hate speech is a step forward. We urge DGC to promote the message of tolerance, peaceful co-existence and interfaith and cultural harmony among all religions, people belonging to different ethnic or racial backgrounds and nations. We also call upon DGC to run awareness campaign against rising tide of Islamophobia.

Mr. Chair,

14. In all such contexts, Digital and social media platforms often permit the spread of disinformation, propaganda and 'hate speech', mainly due to deficiencies in their business models and content moderation practices. As part of any future digital compact, we also must optimize the opportunities to defend against the misuse of online platforms, which cannot be achieved without inclusive international cooperation among all stakeholders. It is also important that business enterprises, including online platforms and social media companies, ensure that their platforms must not be used for spreading disinformation, which leads to discrimination, incitement to hatred, hostility, violence, and polarization.

15. As a responsible Member State, Pakistan is committed to countering the virus of disinformation by all possible means including national means and through international cooperation with Member States and other stakeholders under the umbrella of the United Nations. I would like to reiterate my delegation's full support to the Department of Global Communications.

I thank you.