



**Statement by Ambassador Usman Iqbal Jadoon, Deputy
Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, at
the General Debate of the Fourth Committee of the General
Assembly on agenda item 53: “Questions related to
Information” (17th October 2023)**

Mr. Chair,

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Cuba, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

2. My delegation thanks the Department of Global Communication, especially Under-Secretary General Ms. Melissa Fleming, for the comprehensive presentation on the report of the Secretary General on Questions relating to information.

3. We firmly believe that the ongoing efforts of the United Nations are pivotal in cultivating an enlightened global citizenry, cognizant of their rights and responsibilities in this Information Era. We commend Ms. Fleming for her leadership and express Pakistan's unwavering support and steadfast cooperation in advancing the work of the Department of Global Communication.

4. I also wish to thank and commend my predecessor, Ambassador Mohammad Aamir Khan, for his able chairmanship of the 45th session of the Committee on Information (COI), which was instrumental in the successful adoption of an outcome document by consensus. Building on his work, as Chair of the forthcoming 46th session, I keenly look forward working with you all to advance our agenda.

Mr. Chair,

5. We are grateful to the whole UN system and the international community for standing by Pakistan over the course of the last one year in the wake of climate-induced catastrophic floods. The response to the Pakistan floods, illustrates the importance and utility of sharing information in a timely and sustained manner to mobilize national and international support in the wake of climate and other disasters.

6. The escalation of geostrategic tensions and conflicts in Ukraine and elsewhere has provided a fertile ground for the spread of misinformation. In the absence of a Code of Conduct owned and observed by the international community, the dangers of misinformation and fake information can erode mutual trust among

nations and exacerbate threats to international cooperation and understanding, as well as peace and security.

7. Disinformation, fake news and misinformation are being deployed strategically and represent an emerging and unconventional threat to a stable world order. They must be urgently addressed.

Mr. Chair,

8. While supporting the activities of the Department, my delegation would like to make the following observations and recommendations:

First, Given its potential to inflict widespread harm, the issue of disinformation, hate speech and fake news needs to be analyzed, debated and addressed from the perspective of security, development and human rights, with a view to promote workable solutions.

Second, All purveyors of disinformation must be prevented and deterred, both non-state and state actors. The revelations of a vast, clandestine disinformation network by EU Disinfo Lab in 2021 which waged information war against Pakistan for over 20 years is a prime example of “bad” state actors. They are continuing in their campaigns, targeted at Pakistan, the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and “lower” caste Hindus.

Third, disinformation campaigns are accompanied by “no information” strategies to suppress the freedom of expression when some states choose to impose information blackout, institute digital surveillance and target journalists and others who dare to report the truth about repression and human rights violations. And, carefully crafted strategies are adopted to play down human rights abuses. The vast and viral disinformation about the ongoing crisis in the Middle East underlines the need for fact-checking and promoting information integrity. The UN and the Department for Global Communication needs to address such “hybrid” warfare.

Fourth, Digital spaces are most susceptible to disinformation and fake news, turbo-charged now by artificial intelligence. It is thus urgent to accelerate the formulation and adoption of a Code of Conduct to ensure information integrity in digital spaces.

Fifth, in countering disinformation and fake news, it is vital to involve the major digital platforms and ensure their adherence to the internationally agreed norms and regulations, including those under the digital compact and the proposed Code of Conduct.

Sixth, The rapid rate at which hate speech, Islamophobia, racial profiling and discrimination are being spread, in traditional media and particularly in the digital space, poses an unprecedented pervasive threat to social order, stability and the rule of law. It has global implications.

Mr. Chair,

9. The UN's Department of Information and Communications and the Committee on Information can play a vital role in addressing these areas of concern. Pakistan will continue to play its active and constructive role, including as the current Chair of the Committee on Information, to promote effective outcomes to address these challenges.

I thank you!