



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**Address by
His Excellency
Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif**

**Prime Minister of the
Islamic Republic of Pakistan**

at the

**General Debate of the seventy-
seventh session of the
UN General Assembly**

New York, 23 September 2022

**Address by the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan at
the General Debate of the 77th Session of UN General Assembly**

(23 September 2022)

BISMILLAH-IR-RAHMAN-IR-RAHEEM

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

As I stand here today to tell the story of my country, Pakistan, my heart and mind have not been able to leave home. No words can describe the shock we are living through or how the face of the country lies transformed.

I have come here to explain first hand, the scale and magnitude of this climate catastrophe that has pushed one-third of my country under water in a super storm that no one has seen in living memory.

For 40 days and 40 nights a biblical flood poured down on us, smashing centuries of weather records, challenging everything we knew about disaster, and how to manage it.

Even today, huge swathes of the country are still under-water, submerged in an ocean of human suffering. In this ground zero of climate change, 33 million people, including women and children are now at high risk from health hazards, with 650,000 women giving birth in makeshift tarpaulins.

More than 1500 of my people have perished in the great flood, including over 400 children. Far more are in peril from disease and malnutrition. As we speak, millions of climate migrants are still looking for dry

land to pitch their tents on, with heart-breaking losses to their families, their futures and their livelihoods.

Early estimates suggest that more than 13000 kms of metalled roads have been damaged, over 370 bridges have been swept away, a million homes have been destroyed and another million damaged. More than a million farm animals have been killed. Four Million acres of crops have been washed away, stripping the people of their breadbasket, and damage of an unimaginable scale.

Mr. President,

Pakistan has never seen a more stark and devastating example of the impact of Global Warming. Life in Pakistan has changed forever.

Through this calamity, I have visited, and spent time in every corner of my devastated country. People in Pakistan ask why, why has this happened to them? When global warming rips apart whole families and an entire country at this ferocious speed, it is time to ask why, and time to ask not what can be done but what **MUST** be done.

The undeniable, and inconvenient truth is that this calamity has not been triggered by anything we have done. Our glaciers are melting fast, our forests are burning, and our heat waves have crossed 53 degree C, making us the hottest place on the planet, and now,

Mr. President,

Now, we live through an unprecedented monster monsoon. It is literally a monsoon on steroids, as the UN Secretary General described it most befittingly.

One thing is very clear:

What happened in Pakistan will not stay in Pakistan.

As the SG so candidly says, hotspots like Pakistan fall in the ten most climate-vulnerable list of countries, but emit less than one percent of the

greenhouse gasses that are burning our planet. It is therefore, entirely reasonable to expect some approximation of justice for this loss and damage, not to mention building back better with resilience.

Clearly, the time for talk about actions has passed.

At this point I am profoundly grateful that the UN SG Antonio Guterres visited Pakistan where he spent time with climate refugees, with mothers and children in the tents, And repeatedly assured us of his support and assistance. At this point, I want to thank each and every one of the countries that have sent help, and their representatives to Pakistan to stand in solidarity with us in our most trying hour. On behalf of my nation, I once again express my sincerest appreciation to all of them.

Excellencies,

The impacts on the health and wealth of my country are beyond calculation at this point.

So my real worry, is about the next stage of this challenge. When the cameras leave, and the story just shifts away to conflicts like the Ukraine, my question is, will we be left alone, to cope with a crisis we did not create?

Where and how do we begin, to rehabilitate and reconstruct, after the rescue and relief effort which is still going on for 12 long weeks?

For many of the lives we have saved, the future is dimmed by new fragility, lost homes, decimated livelihoods, deluged croplands, permanent food insecurity and exposure to uncertain futures.

Some 11 million people will be pushed further below the poverty line, while others will drift to cramped urban shelters, leaving little room for climate-smart rebuilding.

Mr. President,

For now, we have mobilized all available resources towards the national relief effort, and repurposed all budget priorities including

development funds, to the rescue and first-order needs of millions. Cash transfers to the most affected, 4 million women heads of household, had begun weeks ago via our social security program, the Benazir Income Support Program, amounting to 70 billion rupees,(over \$300 million). But at this point, the gap between our urgent needs and available resources is amplified by the sheer, unprecedented scale of the disaster. Our manpower and resources are totally overwhelmed.

The question to raise here though is quite a simple one. Why are my people paying the price of such high global warming through no fault of their own? Nature has unleashed her fury on Pakistan without looking at our carbon footprint, which is next to nothing. Our actions did not contribute to this.

The dual costs of global inaction and climate injustice are having a crippling effect on both our treasury and our people, right here, right now.

Mr. President,

Make no mistake, the hour, the year of nature's reckoning is upon us!

Mr. President,

This is going to be a long haul, we can see that under the most trying circumstances, hope is the best enemy of darkness, and Pakistanis are known to be exceptionally resilient people. For my part, I am fully committed to fighting this battle for our survival, in the tents and trenches with my people, until we have rebuilt Pakistan to face the growing challenges of this century.

It is high time we took a pause from the preoccupations of the 20th century to return to the challenges of the 21st. The entire definition of national security has changed today, and unless the leaders of the world come together to act now behind minimum agreed agenda, there will be no earth to fight wars over. Nature will be fighting back, and for that humanity is no match.

Mr. President,

Pakistan's urgent priority right now is to ensure rapid economic growth and lift millions out of destitution and hunger. To enable any such policy momentum, Pakistan needs a stable external environment. We look for peace with all our neighbours, including India. Sustainable peace and stability in South Asia, however, remains contingent upon a just and lasting solution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. At the heart of this longstanding dispute lies the denial of the inalienable right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination.

India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5th August 2019, to change the internationally recognized "disputed" status of Jammu and Kashmir and to alter the demographic structure of the occupied territory further undermined the prospects of peace and inflamed regional tensions. India's relentless campaign of repression against Kashmiris has continued to grow in scale and intensity. In pursuit of this heinous goal, New Delhi has ramped up its military deployments in occupied Jammu and Kashmir to 900,000 troops, thus making it the most militarized zone in the world. The serial brutalization of Kashmiris takes many forms: extrajudicial killings, incarceration, custodial torture and death, indiscriminate use of force, deliberate targeting of Kashmiri youth with pellet guns, and 'collective punishments' imposed on entire communities.

In a classic settler-colonial project, India is seeking to turn the Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir into a Hindu-majority territory, through illegal demographic changes. Millions of fake "domicile certificates" have been issued to non-Kashmiris; Kashmiri land and properties are being seized; electoral districts have been gerrymandered; and over 2.5 million non-Kashmiri illegal voters fraudulently registered. All this is in blatant violation of Security Council resolutions and international law, particularly the 4th Geneva Convention.

For our part, the Pakistani people have always stood by our Kashmiri brothers and sisters in complete solidarity, and will continue to do so until

their right to self-determination is fully realized in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

I assure the world from this august platform, that we in Pakistan remain consistent in our commitment to peace in South Asia. India must take credible steps to create enabling environment for constructive engagement. It should demonstrate its sincerity and willingness, to walk the path of peace and dialogue by reversing its illegal steps of 15 August 2019, and ending forth-with, the process of demographic change.

We hope this world body and the Secretary-General will play their rightful role in urging India to implement the long pending UN resolutions.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan today presents a unique challenge. 30 million Afghans are left without a functional economy and banking system that allows ordinary Afghans to make a living to be able to build a better future.

Pakistan would also like to see an Afghanistan which is at peace with itself and the world, and which respects and nurtures all its citizens, without regard to gender, ethnicity and religion. Pakistan is working to encourage respect for the rights of Afghan girls and women to education and work. Yet, at this point, isolating the Afghan Interim Government could aggravate the suffering of the Afghan people, who are already destitute. Constructive engagement and economic support are more likely to secure a positive response.

A peaceful, prosperous and connected Afghanistan is in our collective interest. As a neighbor, Pakistan has a vital stake in peace and stability in Afghanistan. We have led the humanitarian efforts to help our Afghan brothers and sisters.

We must avoid another civil war, rising terrorism, drug trafficking or new refugees – which none of Afghanistan's neighbors are in a position to accommodate.

Pakistan urges the international community to respond in a positive way to the UN Secretary-General's appeal for \$4.2 billion in humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan; release Afghanistan's financial reserves, essential to revive its banking system.

Pakistan shares the key concern of the international community regarding the threat posed by the major terrorist groups operating from Afghanistan, especially ISIL-K and TTP as well as Al-Qaida, ETIM and IMU. They all need to be dealt with comprehensively, with the support and cooperation of the Interim Afghan authorities. In turn, the international community should address Afghanistan's dire humanitarian needs.

Mr. President,

Pakistan strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Terrorism does not have a religion. It is based on dogma, fueled by poverty, deprivation, injustice and ignorance, and fanned by vested interests.

Pakistan is the principal victim of terrorism. Over the last two decades, we have suffered more than 80,000 casualties and over \$150 billion in economic losses due to terrorist attacks. Our armed forces, with the support of our people, have broken the back of terrorism within Pakistan. Yet, we continue to suffer terrorist attacks from across our borders, sponsored and financed by our regional adversary. We are determined to defeat such cross-border terrorism.

Mr. President,

Islamophobia is a global phenomenon. Since 9/11, suspicion and fear of Muslims and discrimination against them have escalated to epidemic proportions. The officially sponsored campaign of oppression against India's over 200 million Muslims is the worst manifestation of Islamophobia. They are subjected to discriminatory laws and policies, Hijab bans, attacks on mosques, and lynchings by Hindu mobs. I am particularly concerned by the calls for 'genocide' against India's Muslims by some extremist groups.

Earlier this year, this Assembly adopted a landmark resolution, introduced by Pakistan on behalf of the OIC, designating 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. It is my sincere hope that this should lead to concrete measures by the UN and Member States to combat Islamophobia and promote interfaith harmony.

Mr. President,

Pakistan is deeply concerned by the numerous conflicts across the Middle East – including in Syria and Yemen. We support all possible efforts to promote their peaceful resolution.

We call on Israel to put an immediate end to the blatant use of force and flagrant violations of human rights of the Palestinian people and the repeated desecration of the Holy Al Aqsa mosque.

The only just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the Palestinian question is the acceptance of a viable, independent and contiguous Palestinian State, with the pre-1967 borders, and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Mr. President,

The Security Council and the General Assembly must be empowered to play their respective roles under the UN Charter. The Security Council must be expanded by adding 11 new non-permanent members to make it more representative, democratic, transparent, effective and accountable. Adding new permanent members will paralyze the Council's decision-making, enlarge its representational deficit, and create new centres of privilege in violation of the principle of sovereign equality of Member States.

The nations of the world must/ step/ back from the precipice. We must restore peace in Europe, avoid a war in Asia and resolve festering conflicts across the world. We must revive the vision which created the United

Nations, a vision which is often blurred by national interests and hegemonic designs.

Pakistan is a partner for peace. We will work with all those committed to the UN Charter's principles – to restore the vision which created the United Nations and to equip this Organization with the capacity to preserve global peace and promote universal prosperity.

I thank you.