



**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan,
Ambassador Munir Akram at the OCHA briefing on Afghanistan,
(February 1, 2023)**

Thank you very much. And let me first of all start by expressing our deep gratitude to Mr. Martin and the Deputy Secretary General for having retrieved a very difficult situation.

And I think the work that you do and you have done in opening the space for women to be able to continue to work is commendable.

And I think hundreds of 1000s of Afghans who owe their lives to the fact that we have been able to continue humanitarian assistance to the people in dire situations.

From our perspective, the restrictions that have been put by the Afghan interim government flow, not so much from a religious perspective, as from a peculiar cultural perspective of the Pashtoon culture, which requires women to be kept at home.

This is a peculiar distinctive cultural reality of Afghanistan, which has not changed for hundreds, if not 1000s of years. So to expect a complete transformation overnight on the condition that aid will stop to the Afghan people if they do not adhere to international standards, I think that is a rather optimistic expectation.

We have seen over the last year or so that the the normal diplomatic practice of leverage has not delivered results and therefore we need a different strategy.

And that different strategy, I'm glad that both the Deputy Secretary General and yourself have initiated that different strategy.

I believe you have achieved results in terms of the exemptions that have been made and some space that has been promised in your conversations with the Afghan interim government and I think that we must work to broaden that space.

Pakistan and the Islamic countries in the region are working towards that objective.

We have continued engagement despite our disagreements with the positions of the Taliban.

We have made clear our disagreements,

We have tried persuasion

We've sent repeatedly our Ulemas and others to try and convince them that their practice is not consistent with Islam.

And on the 8th of March we will convene a conference here in New York.

My Foreign Minister will host a conference on the issue of women in Islam as another way of conveying a message of what are the standards and freedoms and rights that women enjoy under Islam and Islamic sharia and this is a strategy of persuasion which we will continue.

At the same time, as you were told, so as the DSG by the Afghan Government, that some of the things they have done, which has not been yet recognized by the international community.

They have issued three edicts to protect women from crimes that were being committed even during the last 20 years; the punishment of sale of girls has been banned by the government.

So they've taken some steps in response to what they see as their own responsibilities and the views of the international community.

So I think we need to take that into account and at the same time, we need to work with them to develop the new guidelines which they are working on, which they say they're working on new guidelines.

And I think we can only do that through engagement and of course, Pakistan and other neighboring countries, the Islamic countries will work assiduously to see how to develop guidelines that will conform more closely to the wishes and standards of the international community.

So we believe we should continue engagement. We hope the donor community will not walk away from Afghanistan and its people.

We hope that the appeal to which the Secretary General has made the \$4.4 billion appeal which is only half fulfill will be fully funded as we go forward.

And that we will broaden the scope of engagement because in order to persuade the Taliban we have to broaden we have to revive the Afghan economy. We have to begin reconstruction in Afghanistan.

And it is through these levers that I think we will be able to advance towards the objectives of the international community and the largest objective the international community stability in Afghanistan, and an end to terrorism within and from Afghanistan.

So I hope we will continue to work. And once again, thank you very much for your efforts. These have been eroded and very commendable.

Thanks.