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The Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan accredited to United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and with reference to latter's Note Reference: OHCHR/TESRPRD/DESIB/HRESIS dated 14 August 2020, has the honour to enclose the information from the Government of Pakistan in relations to good practices, mitigating measures and challenges in response to COVID-19 and for effective enjoyment of human rights. This information also contains inputs for the High Commissioner's Oral Update at 45th Session of the Human Rights Council.

The Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan avails itself of the opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the assurances of its highest consideration.



Geneva, 31 August 2020

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,
Geneva

Pakistan's inputs for High Commissioner's oral update on Good Practices, Mitigating practices used and challenges faced to ensure effective enjoyment of human rights

COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated health, economic and social impacts across the world. Apart from massive loss of lives and livelihoods, the pandemic has disrupted economies, societies and healthcare systems, negatively affecting the enjoyment and realization of human rights.

The extent of these impacts has been disproportionately high on developing countries, perpetuating and exacerbating existing inequalities as well as high debt burdens, while shrinking the fiscal space.

Cumulatively, these challenges have eroded decades of development and poverty eradication gains, further eroding the ability of states to achieve the SDGs and hampering efforts to realize and enjoy human rights.

Given the transnational outbreak of COVID-19, there is an organic link between the pandemic's impact as well as response measures at the national and international levels, requiring synergy, coordination, cooperation and assistance.

Pakistan's experience

As a developing country with world's fifth largest population, the spread of COVID-19 presented a multitude of health, social and economic challenges.

The Government of Pakistan pursued a people-centric policy, underpinned by a prudent balance between saving lives and livelihoods on the one hand and enforcing a smart lockdown to contain transmission of the virus in population density settings, on the other.

In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan prioritized its policy interventions on strengthening public health response capacities, poverty alleviation and social protection programs, at scale and with speed. These included direct emergency cash assistance as well as indirect relief measures channelled through businesses, industry and banks.

Mobility restrictions in Pakistan impacted the livelihoods of 24.89 million workers -11.37 million daily/piece rate workers in the formal and informal sectors and 13.52 million self-employed workers in the informal economy. Given the average Pakistani family size of 6.45, the resulting impact was on ~160 million people or roughly two thirds of the country's population.

Despite financial constraints, the Government announced in March an economic relief package of PKR 1200 billion (USD 8 billion) aimed at alleviating poverty, mitigating risk of hunger and malnutrition, providing social protection to the vulnerable and special incentives to businesses especially micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs).

Good practices

Pakistan's COVID-19 response entailed a range of good practices, in full alignment with and support of rights, freedoms, dignity and needs of the people.

Some of the key elements of these practices are as follows:

Given the scale, urgency and complexity of the health, social and economic challenges, Pakistan launched an unprecedented social protection programme aimed at alleviating poverty, ensuring nutrition and safeguarding livelihoods.

The Government of Pakistan allocated PKR 203 billion (~USD 1.23 billion) to deliver one-time emergency cash assistance to 16.9 million families at risk of extreme poverty in a short timeframe. Built into its design are longer-term goals to strengthen overall safety nets.

Administered through the Ehsaas (Compassion) platform, which is Pakistan's new multi-sectoral poverty alleviation framework, each family received Rs. 12,000 (~USD 75) for immediate subsistence. Digital capabilities established over the past year as part of Ehsaas programme, were adapted to deliver Ehsaas Emergency Cash (EEC). Accordingly, within few days of its launch, the programme reached millions of people in most need.

As of 31 August 2020, an amount of over PKR 177 billion has been disbursed to 14.6 million beneficiaries.

In majority of the cases, cash was delivered to women in the family. There was no discrimination on any grounds in delivering Ehsaas Emergency Cash (EEC). 5.6% of the beneficiaries were from religious minorities (minorities population constitutes 3 % of the total population). Transgender citizens also benefitted from EEC. 3.5 million 'new poor' were added as beneficiaries of this cash assistance.¹

Pakistan also facilitated the UNHCR in the distribution of Rs. 12,000/- each as emergency cash assistance to 31,000 Afghan refugee families, using Pakistan Post as a vehicle². This cash assistance programme is inspired by Ehsaas Emergency Cash assistance initiative of the Government of Pakistan in the context of COVID-19.

On 1 April 2020, in another innovative move, the Prime Minister of Pakistan established a "Corona Relief Tiger Force". The volunteer force is part of the multi-pronged strategy by the Government to impose smart lockdown restrictions while also ensuring that Pakistan's poorest citizens – many of whom rely on daily wages to survive – continue to receive adequate supplies of food and other essentials. The relief force volunteers distribute food to the poor and create awareness about Covid-19 in areas under lockdown. Citizens can volunteer for the force through the PM Office portal by filling out a digital form.

¹<https://www.pass.gov.pk/Document/Downloads/EhsaasEmergencyCashReportJuly212020.pdf>

² UNHCR–COVID-19 External Update

Social, financial and digital inclusivity, transparency and integrity of the eligibility and disbursement process, innovation and an end-to-end data-driven automated and rules-based decision-making process are the salient features of the EEC system. Extensive outreach and awareness raising about EEC was carried out through media and community channels.

A whole-of-government, across-the-government-tiers and public private partnership approach was adopted for the implementation of EEC. Details about accounts credited and money withdrawn continue to be posted publicly, online.

The Government decided to deliver assistance through cash in this emergency not only because it had a system by which to do so, and one that offered households choice, but also because cash transfers are known to be the most effective and efficient way of providing assistance. Cash has a lower cost per beneficiary than vouchers which, in turn, have a lower cost per beneficiary than in-kind food distribution. A systematic review showed that for each \$1 provided to beneficiaries, voucher programmes generated up to \$1.50 whereas unconditional cash transfer programmes generated more than \$2 of indirect market benefits

EEC payments were made through branchless banking platforms of two commercial banks (in retail settings and specially established payment campsites) and their 1,800 biometrically enabled ATMs. The available cash out points in 2,270 locations were more than 11,500, across the country, covering an area of over 881,000 square kilometers. Money was deposited in limited mandate accounts and individuals were able to draw the money after biometric authentication in real time.

There were significant cost-savings with the new model; due to lower banking services costs under the new contracts approximately Rs. 3.8 billion were saved in terms of banking costs only for EEC payments.

Eligibility for EEC was determined on the basis of Pakistan's National Socioeconomic Registry (NSER), verified through national database of National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) and a wealth-profiling data analytics mechanism to exclude serious inclusion errors and false claimants in social protection lists. In addition, a web-portal was also established. Only one individual was eligible in each family.

In determining eligibility for EEC, a hybrid targeting approach was adopted, combining emergency assistance for the known vulnerable with demand-based support for the "new poor". Pakistan's National Socioeconomic Registry (NSER) was built in 2011 and is currently being updated. The 2017 population census data does not have information relevant to targeting and it was not possible to use it to frame the COVID-19 response

Verifications were performed on several databases. The individual's spouse data were checked for validity. The 'Sanitization' & Profiling data repository was used to filter fraudulent individuals, identified over time in the social protection ecosystem. Individuals with a PMT score higher than 38 in the NSER were excluded. The decision to use a PMT score of 38 (equivalent) as the ceiling PMT was based on the prevalence of poverty in NSER.

Going forward, Ehsaas programme will invest in financial literacy to promote use of the savings wallets which is part of the payment system design, since Ehsaas regards financial inclusion as one of the pillars of poverty graduation.

COVID 19-spurred EEC provided a window of opportunity for the Government of Pakistan to go beyond business as usual; to define a new normal, to pursue innovation at an unprecedented scale at various levels, to invent and recreate, and redefine leadership.

It demonstrated that by combining phones, internet connectivity, and national IDs, a demand-based system can be created to enable those in distress to seek social support during times of crisis.

This programme also recognized the potential impact of social, financial and digital inclusion in reducing poverty and uplifting human capital and therefore, embedded financial inclusion as one of its time bound outcome-based goals in the Ehsaas Strategy—“Financial and digital inclusion for 7 million individuals (90% women).

Policy discourse is ongoing on the horizontal and vertical scale of Ehsaas cash transfers. The initial success of the emergency cash operation will be built upon further for expansion of social protection in the country. The legacy of this programme is therefore, not simply short-term relief. Impact evaluations have already been commissioned, results from which will be available in time to make the necessary improvements before upscaling cash operations.

The EEC has laid groundwork for deeper financial inclusion in the future, not least by expanding the original Ehsaas target of financial and digital inclusion for 7 million individuals to 16.9 million. With the compressed time frame in which EEC was rolled out, this may happen in Pakistan at a much faster rate.

The ECC programme in Pakistan is also aimed at sharing knowledge, reiterating the significance of learning and flagging the need for orchestrating structures amongst countries with similar resource settings, in a post COVID-19 context.

Pakistan’s experience has generated valuable know-how in designing and implementing a massive national program in real time in a context of complexity and uncertainty with speed. It has provided a platform to learn new ways of doing things; within the Ehsaas context, it has made the government more agile, data driven, experimental, and ambitious.

It has spurred new ways to institutionalize far more cost-effective digital ways of working—consultations, M&E and communication. The urgency involved in implementing this program led to new ways of coordinating across government, and beyond. It helped structure and use new coordination platforms, reaffirming an earlier strong impression about the importance of the multi-stakeholder whole-of-government approach.

The new ways of working provide useful lessons about the need to build internal government capability, leadership and innovation capacity to cope with this prolonged emergency. The new ways of working can also inform the trajectories in a post-COVID world with regard to the policy transformation options, and the new policy architecture for a new normal; insights such as

this can shape structural reform of the governance models, and public welfare services, and redefine the future of statecraft itself.

The case of Pakistan provides useful practices for other countries that utilize unique personal identification systems. It shows that by combining phones, internet connectivity, and national IDs, a digital and innovative demand-based social protection system can be created to enable those in distress to seek social support during crises. The approach can also address rising inequality and advance attainment of SDGs in a post COVID-19 world.

As policymakers around the world search for ways to provide for the basic needs of vulnerable households and mitigate against more permanent economic consequences of COVID-19, and at a time when cash transfer programmes are the most widely used instruments to counter the socioeconomic fallout from the pandemic, the case of Pakistan and lessons learnt from the design and implementation of Ehsaas Emergency Cash can provide useful practices that can inform initiatives in other countries.

Supplementary measures to save livelihoods

The Government of Pakistan instituted a targeted smart lockdown scheme as a part of its overall strategy to tackle the pandemic. Under the new 'smart lockdown' scheme, hotspots where COVID cases reached more than 1.5 cases per thousand, were subject to a mini lockdown. Hotspot residents are given 24 or 48 hours' notice to prepare and the designated areas are sealed for 10–15 days in an attempt to break the virus spread in the wider community. While movement in and out is restricted, residents are advised to maintain social distancing; not attend public gatherings, and keep the sick and elderly inside. Only one person per household is allowed to do the shopping and only food shops and chemists are allowed to operate.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan also established a dedicated COVID Relief Fund for job/livelihood-loss affectees to seek EEC assistance. Under this Fund, for each rupee donated by donors, the Government of Pakistan committed 4 rupees. As of 31 August 2020, PKR 47.7 billion had been raised, out of which PKR 113.751 million have been disbursed to 9.3 million beneficiaries.

In this regard, a web-portal was launched by the Prime Minister's Office on May 2, 2020 soliciting applications from those who had lost jobs due to the lockdown. Under this program, the Government is providing emergency cash of Rs. 12,000 cash to the affectees.

The web portal at https://www.pass.gov.pk/ecs/uct_all.html. contains real time information and updates Ehsaas Emergency Cash disbursements and number of beneficiaries served in this category with provincial, district and tehsil wise breakdowns.

In addition, the Federal Government advised all the provincial governments not to lay off workers and employees during the period of lock-down and for employers to pay salaries/ wages/ remunerations in full. In addition, period of closure may be considered by the employers as paid leave.

Since the COVID outbreak in January 2020, a large number of Pakistanis were stuck on foreign shores due to the closure of international regular flight operations across the world, obliging the Government to start relief flight operations to evacuate its citizens from multiple countries. The Government gave priority to the laid-off workers, students and people with expired visas during the repatriation process.

Despite massive disruptions in global air travel, the Government completed the repatriation of its nationals from around the world on 17 July 2020. From April to July 2020, as many as 250,000 stranded Pakistanis were flown back to Pakistan. Roughly 275 flights (including some special flights) flew in and out of Pakistan and brought 35,000 to 40,000 Pakistani citizens every week.

Apart from emergency cash payments to the marginalized and informal workers, the Government of Pakistan announced a range of additional indirect support measures for citizens, businesses, industry, SMEs, banks and exporters.

These measures included accelerated procurement of wheat (PKR 280 billion) aimed at rural communities; financial support to utility stores for providing essential food items at subsidized rates (PKR 50 billion); relief in fuel process (PKR 70 billion); electricity bill payments (PKR 110 billion); accelerated tax refunds to the export industry (PKR 100 billion); financial support to SMEs (PKR 100 billion) and a supplementary grant to Ministry of Commerce to payback duty drawbacks to textile exporters in the current financial year to improve their liquidity position (PKR 30 billion).

Separately, the provincial governments launched their supplementary relief packages, including direct grants, relaxation in filing provincial taxes and specific measures in health and education sectors.

On 3 April 2020, the Government of Pakistan announced a special incentive package for construction industry aimed at expanding opportunities for employment, especially those who had lost jobs due to COVID-19 related lockdown measures. Among other things, the package included establishment of construction industry development board and a range of incentives and expedited regulatory approvals.³

Amidst the COVID-19, Pakistan created new jobs through tree plantation to help the unemployed and combat poverty. The plantation drive, while already underway, was aimed at employing those who had lost jobs due to pandemic restrictions. The plantation drive aimed to create 60,000 jobs, mostly in rural settings, involving informal workers, youth and women.⁴

Ehsaas Nashonuma (Nutrition to mitigate child stunting)

As part of national efforts to eradicate poverty, hunger and malnutrition, the Prime Minister launched a targeted programme to mitigate stunting among children on August 13, 2020 as a pilot project in 9 districts of the country in the first phase, selected on the basis of high stunting rate and in consultation with the provincial health departments.

³<https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/insights/2020/04/pakistan-government-and-institution-measures-in-response-to-covid.html>

⁴<https://borgenproject.org/new-jobs-in-pakistan-helping-the-unemployed/>

Ehsaas Nashonuma is a health and nutrition conditional cash transfer programme which aims to address stunting in children under 23 months of age.

Under the programme, 33 Ehsaas Nashonuma Marakiz/Centers are being established at Tehsil level health facilities to provide all the services under one roof. Ehsaas Nashonuma is fully funded by the Government of Pakistan and is being executed together with the World Food Programme as an implementing partner.

Ehsaas Nashonuma aims to address stunting among pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and their children less than 2 years of age through conditional cash transfers of PKR 1500 per quarter per PLW for boy child and PKR 2,000/- per quarter per girl child of Ehsaas Kafaalat beneficiaries linked with consumption of specialized nutritious food, immunization and attendance of health awareness sessions on quarterly basis.

This intervention will provide a solid, context-driven and scalable model for integrating nutrition-sensitive approaches within social protection platforms. The action is anchored in the need to address high rates of malnutrition which disproportionately affect the poorest segments of the population, thereby affecting their ability to enjoy other human rights.

Special measures for food and shelter

Although launched prior to the on-set of COVID-19, the Government of Pakistan continued and expanded other support measures for the marginalized and vulnerable through Panahgah (Shelter for homeless) and Langars (Free food camps) across the country.

The Government of Pakistan also opened a range of assistance initiatives through Ehsaas Roshan Portal and Ehsaas Langars, the Ehsaas Langar and Panahgah App to empower welfare organizations to play a well-coordinated role with the government in responding to the COVID-19.

The Ehsaas Roshan program links private sector organizations willing to donate food rations, to government-verified beneficiaries. Until 3 July 2020, as many as 738,869 requests had been received on the portal and food assistance had been kicked off. A beta version of the Ehsaas Langar and Panahgah app provides public information about Langars and Panahgahs countrywide.

In the wake of the economic hardship being experienced by the vulnerable due to the ongoing coronavirus crisis, Ehsaas has opened 6 Langars in Punjab, KP, Sindh and Islamabad through public private partnership. Each Langar distributes around 1,200 complimentary meals to labourers for two times daily. In Islamabad and Lahore, “Ehsaas Langar on Wheels” has been introduced as well in the context of COVID-19 to serve cooked food aid to the deserving.⁵

Financial and monetary relief for the banking sector

In addition to direct policy interventions such as the Ehsaas Emergency Cash, indirect support measures were also undertaken by Pakistan for businesses, industry and banks with a view to

⁵<https://www.pass.gov.pk/Detailfb9d158-3fe8-40ef-a933-ba2a8e84684a>

promoting economic activity and thereby contributing to poverty alleviation, saving livelihoods and affording essential healthcare.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) introduced a temporary refinance scheme for payment of wages and salaries to the workers and employees to prevent lay off.⁶

Under 'Refinance Facility for Combating COVID-19 (RFCC)', SBP is assisting banks to provide financing to health authorities at a maximum end-user rate of 3 percent for 5 years for the purchase of equipment to detect, contain and treat the Corona virus. The SBP has reduced policy rate by a cumulative 525 basis point since 17 March 2020.

The SBP has also announced a comprehensive relief package in collaboration with Pakistan Banks Association for household and business (microfinance, SME, Corporate, Commercial, Retail and Agriculture) to manage their finance through this temporary phase of disruption. Key highlights of the package are as follows:

- **Increase in Banks' overall pool of loanable funds**

To support the banking sector to supply additional loans to businesses and households, SBP has reduced the Capital Conservation Buffer (CCB) from its existing level of 2.50% to 1.50%. This will enable banks to lend an additional amount of around Rs. 800 billion, an amount equivalent to about 10% of their current outstanding loans. The reduced CCB level will remain applicable till further instructions by SBP.

- **Permanent increase in the regulatory limit on extension of credit to SMEs**

SMEs typically bear the brunt of credit supply contractions during periods of heightened risk aversion and economic downturn. Therefore, as a tool to incentivize banks to provide additional loans to retail SMEs, the existing regulatory retail limit of Rs. 125 million per SME has been permanently enhanced to Rs. 180 million with immediate effect. This measure will facilitate banks to provide more loans to SMEs, which currently stand at around Rs. 470 billion

- **Increase in borrowing limits for individuals for one year.**

The capacity to borrow from banks for individuals is limited by their capacity to bear the burden of debt, defined in terms of a percentage of their income and known as a Debt Burden Ratio (DBR). SBP has relaxed the DBR for consumer loans from 50% to 60%. This measure will allow about 2.3 million individuals to borrow more from banks in this time of need.

- **Deferment of payment of principal on loan obligations by banks.**

Banks and DFIs will defer the payment of principal on loans and advances by one year. To avail this relaxation, borrowers should submit a written request to the banks

⁶ <http://www.sbp.org.pk/>

before 30th June 2020. They will, however, continue to service the mark-up amount as per agreed terms and conditions. The deferment of principal will not affect borrower's credit history and such facilities will also not be reported as restructured/rescheduled in the credit bureau's data. The total amount of principal coming due over the next year is about Rs. 4,700 billion.

- **Temporary relaxation in regulatory criteria for restructuring/rescheduling of loans till 31st March 2021.**

For borrowers whose financial conditions require relief beyond extension of principal repayment for one year, SBP has relaxed the regulatory criteria for restructuring/rescheduling of loans. The loans that are re-scheduled/restructured within 180 days from the due date of payment will not be treated as defaults. Banks would also not be required to suspend the unrealized mark-up against such loans. In addition, the timeline for classification of "Trade Bills" has been extended from 180 days to 365 days.

- **Reduction in margin call requirements against bank financing**

Keeping in view the steep decline in share prices, margin call requirement of 30% vis-a-vis banks' financing against listed shares has been significantly reduced to 10%. Banks have also been allowed to take exposure on borrowers against the shares of their group companies. Banks have currently extended loans in excess of Rs. 100 billion against listed shares.

- **Extension of relief package to borrowers availing loans under Refinance Schemes**

The scope of relief package was expanded on 3rd April, 2020 by allowing similar relaxations to borrowers availing loans under various refinance schemes.

Borrowers from corporate, consumer, agriculture, SMEs and microfinance sectors can avail deferment of principal amount for one year while continue servicing mark up. They can also apply for rescheduling/restructuring if they are not able to service mark-up payment.

The Government has undertaken these steps to help reduce the social and financial impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable people in the society and support economic resilience and recovery.

Public Health Response

The Government of Pakistan took a number of steps including the establishment of the National Coordination Committee and the National Command Operation Centre for Covid-19 to respond to the immediate public health needs such as testing kits, protection equipment, among others.

Some of the specific steps included inter alia support for health and food supplies (PKR 15 billion), elimination of the import duties on imports of emergency health equipment and a

transfer to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) for the purchase of necessary emergency health equipment to deal with the pandemic (PKR 25 billion).

Separately, the Government of Pakistan launched, in collaboration with WHO and UN system, a Pakistan Preparedness and Response Plan (PPRP)⁷ worth \$ 595 million as a “blueprint” to fill the gaps to combat COVID-19 in Pakistan. Launched on April 23, 2020, the PPRP is intended to strengthen Pakistan’s capacity in emergency prevention, preparedness, response and relief and build health systems for a period of 9 months from April to December 2020.

Pakistan continues to advocate that the COVID-19 vaccine, as and when it was developed, must be declared a “global public good” and made available on an equitable basis to everyone, everywhere.

In order to meet the growing domestic public health care demands, the Government of Pakistan launched “Yaran e Watan” program in April 2020. Being a joint initiative by the Government of Pakistan and the Pakistani diaspora health communities, its primary focus is on engaging overseas health professionals to provide Telehealth services in Pakistan, such as Telemedicine consultations to COVID-19 patients, Tele-training of health workforce members and research collaborations specific to COVID-19.

Recognizing the long-term and deleterious economic impact of COVID-19 especially on the developing countries, the Prime Minister of Pakistan launched in April a “Global Initiative on Debt Relief”. The Prime Minister has reached out to Heads of State/Government from a wide range of countries, notably from the Paris Club, Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and Heads of relevant international organizations and international financial institutions, seeking support for this initiative.

Cumulatively, these steps taken by Pakistan represent efforts to create a strong foundation for the enjoyment of all human rights; to safeguard human dignity and realize the right to food, health, social security, housing, work, and development, among others.

Challenges

National responses to contain the transmission of the corona virus and to mitigate rising poverty, hunger and unemployment have led to unprecedented expenditures, while revenues have declined. The COVID pandemic has led to shrinking of international trade, dwindling FDI and reduced foreign remittances, all vital sources of national revenues for developing countries.

The cumulative effect of more than 5% reduction in global GDP growth, accompanied by reductions in national revenue sources, would further squeeze the fiscal space and further aggravate the foreign debt on developing countries.

These disconcerting developments would undermine the ability of developing countries to generate and secure necessary financing to meet the development needs of societies and communities. Absent greater mobilization of international finance and liquidity, developing

⁷<https://unic.org.pk/pprp-covid-19/>

countries face the real risks of resurgence in poverty, hunger and disease. Similarly, global efforts to reverse the negative impacts of climate change and efforts to build back better are likely to be undermined severely.

A safe and efficacious COVID vaccine represents the only effective guarantee against the pandemic. However, diminishing fiscal space and rising expenditures on repayment of foreign debt would present an additional layer of challenges to developing countries to secure timely and affordable access to vaccines. Advance COVID vaccine purchases by countries, that are in a position to do so, would lock out sufficient supply of vaccines to millions in developing countries.

A comprehensive and coordinated international public health and economic response is therefore essential, anchored in the principles of fair and equitable supply, access and use of COVID related therapeutics and vaccines. Global advocacy for COVID vaccine to be treated as global public good and facilitating meaningful international assistance and cooperation are both urgent and essential to facilitate realization of human rights by everyone and to achieve SDGs.

Even as COVID response strategies have focused on economic stimuli and enhanced supply of testing and protective equipment, in some cases human rights have been systematically violated i.e. discrimination and violence against communities and individuals on the basis of race, religion or belief.

In a few cases, COVID has been used as a cover by some states to usurp the fundamental rights and freedoms of people under foreign occupation, including by accelerating demographic changes in the occupied territories, in clear breach of international law.

While States have a primary responsibility to uphold and help realize human rights, COVID related human rights concerns and the impact of the pandemic on realization of these rights necessitate continued advocacy, awareness raising and mobilization of global support by the Human Rights Council, the OHCHR and the Special Procedures Mandate Holders.
