

# Media Update

8 March 2021

## United Nations Pakistan

### PRESS RELEASE

#### International Women's Day Message from the Resident Coordinator, United Nations Pakistan

This International Women's Day comes one year after the declaration of Corona Virus as a global pandemic. The Covid pandemic has been hard on everyone but has weighed doubly on women. The pandemic has deepened economic and social stress, women have lost their incomes, working mothers have born the extra burden of educating children at home and caring for older family members, and restrictions in movement have exacerbated intimate partner violence.

One of the most heartening experiences during this hard year has been to witness the vital leadership role of women in Pakistan, including my United Nations colleagues, in fighting this disease. And on this eighth of March 2021, International Women's day, it is to them I wish to pay tribute.

Across this great country I have been privileged to meet women leading and contributing in a myriad ways, Federal and Provincial ministers leading the socio economic and medical response, local administrators running districts, scientists, doctors, nurses, midwives, business women, Policewomen caring for the abused, women working in NGOs and the countless women looking after their families and trying to make ends meet in difficult times.

Over this last year the United Nations worked closely in support of the government of Pakistan in the response against the disease, in every area of our work, medical and socio economic, women were in a leading role. Women have led in bringing the COVAX vaccination initiative to Pakistan; I have seen female colleagues working on Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) to keep health professionals and facilities safe, and others increasing testing services across the country through technical support in Laboratories and Diagnostics, and initiatives on disabilities and assistive technology. In the socioeconomic

area female colleagues have led on social protection, and working to make schools safe to reopen and in supporting to homebased workers.

And at times I have glimpsed and heard the daily challenges that their choice to serve brings; juggling a zoom call with a toddler that needs attention right now, being on the other side of the world from their children as they start out at university, and the worries for a sick parent in another city maybe another country.

This last year has been hard for all of us, and during this time women have once again led and contributed to the response and to our society, as the women of Pakistan and my female colleagues have demonstrated. But we have to recognize that society puts many obstacles in their path, girls are not offered the same chance to go to school, many careers and profession remain dominated by men and sometimes family pressure holds women back. In the coming year we must continue to remove these obstacles, we need to see more girls in primary school, in secondary school and in tertiary education, women need to have the same access to internet and all the benefits of the information age, wherever a woman lives she must have the same access to health services, and we all need to work towards equal job and career opportunities for women.

As we work together to help our society recover from COVID19 our efforts must also aim to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

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