

Media Update

10 September 2022

UNITED NATIONS

SECRETARY-GENERAL REMARKS

Secretary-General's remarks following a briefing on the floods by Sindh province's Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah

Sukkur, 10 September

It is difficult not to feel deeply moved when we hear such a detailed description of tragedy, of the loss of life, of destruction, the loss of property, the loss of livelihoods. Listening to you I see that there is no loss of hope. But that hope, to materialize, needs the international community to recognize three basic facts.

First, as you said, humanity has been waging war on nature, and nature strikes back. But nature strikes back in Sindh, but it was not Sindh that has made the emissions of greenhouse gases that have accelerated climate change so dramatically. So, there is a very unfair situation, in relation to the level of destruction that we are seeing, here, in Sindh.

And so, it is essential for the international community to understand three things, and obviously, developed countries have an absolutely key role to play in international financial institutions, joining them.

First is that Pakistan, including Sindh, need today massive financial support to overcome this crisis. And I've been saying – and you repeated it - this is not a matter of generosity, it's a matter of justice.

Second, we need to stop the madness with which we are treating nature. According to the scientific community, we need to reduce emissions by 45 per

cent until 2030. I'm not talking about the end of the century, I'm not talking about 2050, I am talking about now. Now is the time to reduce emissions. This will be essential in the discussions in Cairo of the [COP27].

But the fact is that we are already living in a world where climate change is acting in such a devastating way. So, there must be massive support to what usually is called adaptation, which means to build resilient infrastructure and to support resilient communities and to create conditions for those that are in the hotspots of climate change. Pakistan is one of the hotspots of climate change. For those countries to be able to prepare for the next disaster and to be able to resist the next disaster, this needs a huge investment and this investment needs to be provided.

That's why we are asking for a strong increase in the financing for adaptation, of resilient infrastructure. At the same time, there has not yet, until now, been a serious discussion -about conditions for a serious discussion- on loss and damage.

And then, I would like to say that what the UN is doing in Pakistan is a drop in the ocean of what is needed. We are perfectly aware of our limited capacity and resources. But one thing you can be absolutely sure, we are in total solidarity with the Pakistani people. We will do everything we can, not only to use our limited capacities, but to raise awareness and to request those that have the capacity to support Pakistan - to request that they do it, they do it now, they do it massively, and that they do it also looking into the preparation of this country to face future challenges, to be able to protect the population when those future challenges are coming.

Our commitment, our very strong and emotional solidarity is something you can count on.

Thank you very much.

Remarks by the Secretary-General following meeting with “first responders” - citizens who volunteered to help their community in the floods’ aftermath

Larkana, 10 September

Ladies and gentlemen,

I was extremely impressed by what you have told us today. You have shown an enormous courage, an enormous generosity and you are true symbols of solidarity.

I can imagine each one of you, with the monsoon coming, with great stress, your house destroyed and you in danger. You were able, not only to think about yourselves, but to think about the others, and to help rescue the others. That is a fantastic example for the world.

I had, during my visit, excellent briefings by the different centres in Islamabad, in Sukkur and in my visit to Balochistan. I heard all the numbers: the number of people that died, cattle that died, number of people needing assistance, all the numbers. It was very well presented, which means that those that are coordinating the response know exactly what they are doing.

But your testimony is much more important. It’s not about numbers, it’s about people, about the farmers that have lost their crops, about those that have lost members of their family, about those that have seen their houses destroyed, about those that have lost their cattle, about those that have no money to pay the loans that they have contracted to be able to plant.

It was these people that each one of you was rescuing, helping to escape these horrible floods.

Unfortunately, now in the world, there are many people who are selfish and only think about themselves. But I know if we use your example of solidarity, generosity and courage, to ask the world to have the same attitude in support of Pakistan, for Pakistan to be able to help all those I have described and that are suffering so much.

You are helping your neighbour.

In the world - this is only one world - so the neighbours in general of Pakistan need to be as generous as you were with your neighbours.

Thank you very much for your work that was very important.

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
PRESS CONFERENCE WITH FOREIGN MINISTER OF
PAKISTAN**

10 September 2022, Karachi, Pakistan

[as delivered]

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen of the media.

We have declared war on nature. And, as we see here in Pakistan, nature is striking back, with devastating consequences.

Climate change is super-charging the destruction of our planet.

I have seen many humanitarian disasters in the world, but I have never seen climate carnage on this scale. I have simply no words to describe what I have seen today: a flooded area that is three times the total area of my own country, Portugal.

Over 1,300 lives were lost. Tens of millions of people homeless. One-third of this vast country submerged. Livestock and crops wiped out.

But behind these numbers lie unquantifiable depths of human suffering.

But I have also seen great heights of human endurance and heroism – from emergency workers to ordinary people helping their neighbors.

Of course, we can quote numbers that are appalling, but this is a question about people who suffer: the families that have lost their houses, or members of the family. The farmers who have lost their crops or their livestock. Those who no longer have the livelihoods they need to sustain their lives.

At the same time, the most emotional moment for me during this visit was to listen to a group of women and men who have sacrificed their possessions, the possibility to rescue things from their own houses. They left everything to help neighbours to be rescued, to help neighbours to come out of houses that were falling apart, and to be able to reach safety with them.

This extraordinary generosity of poor people has touched me deeply and I hope this example will be followed by all those in the world that have power to support Pakistan in this hour of need.

I want to pay tribute to the gigantic efforts of the Pakistani authorities – civilian and military, national and regional.

I also want to thank the civil society, humanitarian organizations and also my UN colleagues who have rushed in. I also want to take profit to thank all those donors who have started to support Pakistan in this terrible hour.

The needs are enormous – and I urge massive and urgent financial support for Pakistan. And this is not just a question of solidarity or generosity. It is a question of justice. Pakistan is paying the price of something that was created by others.

I have called this a monsoon on steroids, and there is nothing natural about disasters of this scale.

Climate change caused by human activity is supercharging storms and catastrophes in Pakistan, but also in Chad, the Horn of Africa with their terrible drought and the risk of famine, and beyond.

All these countries did not cause the problem – but they are paying the price.

These extreme weather events have the fingerprints of human activity all over them – specifically, the burning of fossil fuels heating our planet.

The G20 countries are responsible for 80 per cent of today's emissions – 1 per cent, 80 per cent – and developed economies are responsible for the vast majority of greenhouse gases throughout history.

Here from Pakistan, I want to reinforce a clear point:

Wealthier countries are morally responsible for helping developing countries like Pakistan to recover from disasters like these, and to adapt, to build resilience to climate impacts that unfortunately will be repeated in the future.

As is painfully evident, those impacts are skyrocketing.

People living in high climate vulnerability conditions, including in South Asia, are 15 times more likely to die from climate impacts. Nearly half of humanity is now in this category, the overwhelming majority in the developing world.

As Pakistan is deluged, as famine stalks the Horn of Africa, rich countries must step up adaptation finance.

At least half of all climate finance must go to adaptation and climate resilience for countries like Pakistan to be able to face the next floods in a way that protects their citizens and protects their economy and their wealth.

All countries – with the G20 leading the way – must boost their national emissions reduction targets every year, until the world's 1.5C temperature limit is guaranteed, and we are at risk of making it irreversibly impossible.

I have seen an epic human tragedy here in Pakistan, but I also have seen the future.

As our planet continues to warm, all countries will increasingly suffer losses and damage from climate beyond their capacity to adapt.

Today, it's Pakistan. Tomorrow, it could be your country, wherever you live.

This is a global crisis. As the [Foreign] Minister said, it demands a global response.

Thank you.

Secretary-General's Remarks to the press following meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the National Flood Response and Coordination Center in Islamabad

Islamabad, 9 September 2022

Prime Minister,

Allow me, first, a few words to the Pakistani people, and then to people around the world.

To the Pakistani people: I am no stranger to Pakistan. I have a love affair with your country since 17 years ago, when I started my functions as High Commissioner for Refugees. I have always witnessed their enormous generosity, receiving at the [time] more than 6 million Afghan refugees, protecting, assisting them, sharing your meagre resources with them. I've seen your generosity, helping each other, helping family, helping communities.

When I came in 2005, because of the earthquake, when I came in 2010, because of the floods, and when I came later, during the dramatic incursion of terrorism around the Swat Valley and further, closer to Islamabad. Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced, and I was there, with them.

And so, I know what it means for the Pakistani people, this unprecedented natural disaster. There is no memory of anything similar to what has happened with the impact of climate change on Pakistan. And I want to reassure you, that we'll do everything possible to mobilize the international community, to support your country, and to support all of you in this very dramatic situation in which, beyond the numbers - the numbers are appalling - but beyond the numbers, I see the families that have lost their loved ones. I see the families that lost their houses. I see the families that lost their crops. I see the families that lost their jobs, and that are living in desperate conditions at the present moment.

I have seen the enormous effort, that response from civil servants, the government, from the army, from the NGOs, from the population, even an extraordinary demonstration of solidarity within the provinces of Pakistan.

And I want to say a few words to the international community. Pakistan needs massive financial support to respond to these crises that have costed, according to some estimates that I've heard today, about \$30 billion, and counting.

That support is entirely necessary. And it is not a matter of solidarity. It's a matter of justice. Pakistan has not contributed in a meaningful way to climate change. The level of emissions in this country is relatively low. But Pakistan is one of the most dramatically impacted countries by climate change. It is on the front lines of the impact of climate change. It is absolutely essential that this is recognized by the international community, especially by those countries that have contributed more to climate change. And that effective solidarity, effective justice is now shown by mobilizing massive support for relief, for rehabilitation or for reconstruction after these devastating impacts of the monsoon, of accelerated melting glaciers.

At the same time, this is the moment to say that we are heading into a disaster. We have waged war on nature and nature is striking back and striking back in a devastating way. Today in Pakistan, tomorrow in any of your countries.

We need to stop the increase in emissions and start reducing them now. At the same time, we need to mobilize much more resources to support those countries that need to build resilience. It is what is called adaptation that need to create the conditions to resist to the impact of these devastating disasters caused by climate change.

And at the same time, as a matter of justice to put seriously on the table in the next Conference of States Parties to the convention [on climate change], the question of loss and damage that is something that has been, [until] now, not discussed seriously in international climate talks. This is a time to mobilize the efforts of everybody to mitigate climate change. And this is the time to mobilize every group of people to support massively the Pakistani people in this dramatic moment.

Secretary-General's remarks at press conference with the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari

Islamabad, 9 September 2022

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, good afternoon.

I'm here to express my deep solidarity with the Pakistani people over the devastating loss of life, human suffering and physical damage caused by this year's floods. A problem of the densification of climate change.

Today, I was briefed by Prime Minister Sharif, Foreign Minister Bhutto, and other senior members of the government on the latest developments.

Some regions of Pakistan have just experienced their wettest August on record. And rainfall in some provinces was up to eight times higher than usual. Climate change is there.

Tomorrow, I will see the impact of the floods in different areas of the country.

But we have all seen media images of the extraordinary destruction. I can only imagine the power and ferocity of the water as it bore down on villages, roads, bridges and everything else in its path. It was clearly terrifying – a wall of water.

My heart goes out to everyone who has lost loved ones in this tragedy, and all those who have been affected by the loss of their homes, their businesses and their livelihoods.

I visited Pakistan many times when I was High Commissioner for Refugees. Pakistan hosts one of the most effective and generous refugee operations of the world, in support of millions of Afghans.

So, this is not my first visit to Pakistan. I have a love affair with the Pakistani people for 17 years. I was, in 2005, talking to the victims of the earthquake. I remember the devastation of floods in 2010. And I remember being with displaced people when you had these terrorist attacks going down in the Swat Valley and coming close to Islamabad and seeing how dramatic their situation is. And, many times, in Balochistan, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, I saw how [Pakistani] communities would generously host Afghan refugees. And one thing I have always discovered in Pakistan, was the way people would support other people. Pakistanis or Afghans, communities would support other communities with an enormous sense of generosity and solidarity.

And so, it is very emotional for me to see the level of suffering that so many Pakistanis are having at the present moment. Because it is heartbreaking to see such a generous people going through this crisis.

No country deserves this fate, but particularly not countries like Pakistan that have done almost nothing to contribute to global warming.

Pakistan and other developing countries, from the Horn of Africa to the Sahel, are paying a horrific price for the intransigence of big emitters that continue to bet on fossil fuels, in the face of science, common sense and basic human decency.

Even today, emissions are rising as people die in floods and famines.

This is insanity. This is collective suicide.

From Pakistan, I am issuing a global appeal: stop the madness; end the war with nature; invest in renewable energy now.

And as the crisis gathers pace, it's clear that most countries are nowhere near prepared.

Developed countries must step up and provide Pakistan and other countries on the frontlines with the financial and technical resources they need to survive extreme weather events like these deadly floods.

Half of all climate finance must go to adaptation and resilience in the developing world. Developed countries must produce a credible roadmap to back their commitment to double their financial support.

Loss and damage from the climate crisis is not a future event. It is happening now, all around us. I urge governments to address this issue at COP 27 with the seriousness it deserves.

Ladies and gentlemen of the media,

The United Nations is on the ground to support the Pakistani government's relief efforts. We and the civil society are making good use of the funds released from the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund, and we are stepping up our efforts through an air bridge from Dubai.

Our people have delivered food or cash assistance to hundreds of thousands of people in Balochistan and Sindh, tons of emergency supplies to support children and women. But let's be clear, what we have done is a drop in the ocean of the needs of the Pakistani people.

Hundreds of thousands of displaced people are living in camps, and many more – 6 million, as far as I know, are with host communities, that are sharing everything with them.

An important reason for my visit is to draw the attention of the international community to this climate catastrophe, and to appeal for massive support. Pakistan needs massive financial support for the relief and then, for the recovery.

And, as I said this morning – and I repeat- this is not a matter of solidarity or generosity; it is a matter of justice.

Before I conclude, allow me to say a few words about the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second.

On behalf of the United Nations, I extend my sincere condolences to the Queen's family and to the people of the United Kingdom and the wider Commonwealth.

Queen Elizabeth exemplified the values of calmness, dignity, and grace. For as long as I can remember, she has been a reassuring presence on the global stage.

Thank you.

Q: [On compensation for losses because of the historical policies of industrialized countries that are contributing to global warming.]

SG: Well, it is obvious that there are a number of countries in the world – we calculate about 15 hotspots - where countries are particularly vulnerable and are already paying a heavy price in relation to climate change.

Climate change is not a problem of the future. Climate change is a problem of today. It is happening, people are suffering. And that is why I said in my intervention, and I repeat now, the questions of loss and damage need to be seriously discussed. And that discussion that I hope will take place in the COP in Cairo, hopefully will be translated by an effective support from the developed world to the most impacted developing countries to build resilience and to adapt to the circumstances that were created by others. That is why this is not a matter of generosity; it is a matter of justice.

Q: [Is the Flash Appeal going to be enough?]

SG: When there is a crisis anywhere in the world, we issue in the next few days a so-called Flash Appeal and the Flash Appeal has not as an objective to gather the funds to solve the problem. It has as an objective to raise some funds to start being able to act. We need much more than what was in that

Flash Appeal and especially the Government of Pakistan must be supported directly by the international community.

We have discussed today the possibility of organizing, and we are ready to organize it together with the Pakistani Government – of course, this is a decision for the Pakistani Government to take - as soon as there is a clear assessment of the needs - mostly in relation to relief but also in relation to really mitigation and reconstruction to organize an international conference aiming at global mobilization of support to Pakistan at the levels which are many billions - let's be clear - at the levels that will be necessary to solve the problem.

Flash Appeals are something that we launch in any circumstances in the world just to allow for agencies to start providing the minimum relief as the first step.

Q: [On donor's conference; would other governments be generous enough?]

SG: Of course, I am worried [by] the fact that we're witnessing some reductions in official development aid. We have several of our operations severely underfunded. So, there is a concern in relation to that. But this is not a usual event. This is an unprecedented event.

And so, I think these will first of all, help us put again climate change in the front line of international agenda. Climate change has been losing ground in international agenda, both in relation to political development and in relation to even the media coverage. And it's absolutely essential to put it again in its national agenda because climate change is the defining issue of our time. And based on that I have hopes that a conference – being able to show- I mean the images are absolutely, I mean, appalling. I believe a conference will be able to [raise] consciousness that people work and to mobilize the support that is needed.

This support is not only thinking about these floods. Let's not forget that monsoons have not ended, that the melting of glaciers will go on and for a number of years will still increase. So, we need to support Pakistan, to be prepared for the future - not only to respond to the present crisis.

Q: [On possibility of debt write off for Pakistan.]

SG: If there is anything, I have been talking all the time - especially since the beginning of the COVID - is the absolute need to have effective mechanisms of debt relief for developing countries that are on the verge of financial collapse.

We had just one initiative, as you remember, the suspension of the payment of debt now for two years, for least developed countries, but there are no mechanisms of debt relief. There is a framework that has been very slow, and

only three countries applied because it's not effective at all. And there are no mechanisms of debt relief in place, especially for middle income countries.

And this is something I've been putting as much as I can in the agenda of the G7 and the G20 of the meetings of the IMF and World Bank. I will not stop this campaign because I think it's absolutely essential. The risks for the world of a group of countries having defaults would be extremely high.

We discussed today some creative ideas that we are trying to put on the table in different scenarios, namely, in relation to climate change.

One of those ideas, that I very much cherish and we are trying to promote as we speak, is in relation to debt swaps for investments in adaptation, which means the country, instead of paying its debt, invests that money in transition for a green economy and in building resilience against the impacts of climate change.

This idea was born in our discussions with small island developing states that are, as you know, some of the most impacted countries in the world and some of them risk to disappear. And we are making a strong campaign with those that have power in the international financial institutions to adopt as a practice instruments of debt relief and an improvement of our climate action, the possibility that these swaps instead of paying the debt, you invest in adaptation to a green economy.

Q: [How can Pakistanis trust that United Nations will help?]

SG: If there is something that the United Nations, and me in particular, have been insisting very strongly in the last few years is the absolute need of developed countries to fully fulfill their commitments in the Paris Agreement in relation to support to developing countries.

We were behind the campaign that was made for adaptation to be taken seriously and that led to the promise – let's see what happens to the promise – of \$40 billion per year in support for adaptation in developing countries, and we are in the first line of putting in the agenda of the COP - loss and damage. So, we are really doing everything we can to push those issues in the agenda and to pressure for them to happen.

But it is not the United Nations that decides those things. It is Member States themselves, and it is the international financial institutions that manage to a certain extent, if management is the right word to [use] - the global financial system. And if there is something that I have been saying loud and clear, it is that our global financial system is morally bankrupt.

Q: [On Jammu and Kashmir; is Secretary-General ready to mediate?]

SG: As a matter of fact, if there is something that I have been always offering, it is my good offices in mediation.

But as you know, the Indian side considers that this is a bilateral matter to be solved only by Pakistan and India, and the mediation of the United Nations has not been accepted until now.

On the other hand, we have been very active in relation to the clear affirmation that human rights must be respected.

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