



Remarks by Ambassador Tahir Hussain Andrabi, Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, during presentation of the OHCHR Annual Report for 2020

10 June 2021

Madam High Commissioner,

Thank you for presentation of the Annual Report.

We recognize your Office's important role as lynchpin of the UN human right architecture, and reaffirm our continued political and financial support to OHCHR.

Due to the COVID pandemic, 2020 was indeed a challenging year for all of us.

We acknowledge OHCHR's efforts to adapt and continue its human rights work despite the unprecedented disruption caused by the pandemic.

Madam High Commissioner,

Beyond its challenges, the COVID context also presents opportunities to build back better, address structural human rights gaps and rectify the wrongs of past.

In this regard, I would like to make three specific points:

First, the pre-existing socio-economic inequalities have been accentuated as a result of COVID pandemic. Response strategies should, therefore, address these inequalities, and prioritize socio-economic and cultural rights as part of human-rights centered recovery efforts.

We recognize your advocacy for global vaccine equity and against vaccine nationalism. We encourage you to continue to do so. Vaccine equity, affordability, and equitable distribution provide the key to unlock a sustainable recovery pathway.

Providing debt relief for developing countries and pushing back against illicit financial flows are essential to create policy and fiscal space for countries in the global South.

Second, Under the COVID-related restrictions and lockdowns, the plight of people living in situations of foreign occupation has considerably worsened. The pandemic is being exploited by occupation regimes to normalize curfews, blockade, military sieges, arbitrary arrests, imprisonment and stifling of dissent with impunity.

The serious human rights situation in occupied Jammu & Kashmir is a case in point. Under an iron curtain of restrictions and clampdown, the occupying power has accelerated the pace of demographic engineering of the UN-recognized disputed territory since 05th August 2019. In



doing so, it has scaled up its systematic human rights violations against the Kashmiri people using draconian laws and with full impunity.

In exercise of your prevention mandate, we urge you and your Office to continue monitoring the human rights situation in Jammu & Kashmir and issue an updated Kashmir report.

Finally, we take positive note of the fact that personnel from more than 145 nationalities are manning your team at Headquarters and in the field. Nonetheless, the Office continues to lack adequate equitable geographical representation. We strongly encourage you to take concrete measures to address this serious imbalance, so that OHCHR's work truly reflects plurality of views, approaches, and as well as value systems. We propose, as part of these efforts, to publish a branch-wise geographic representation details in the next Annual Report.

I thank you.