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**Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN
Geneva**

Statement

**Keynote address by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Imran Khan
at the First Global Refugee Forum (GRF), Geneva (Switzerland)
17 December 2019**

I am honoured to be with the leaders of Turkey, Ethiopia, Germany and Costa Rica to co-convene the first Global Forum on Refugees.

I wish to thank the Government of Switzerland and UNHCR for co-hosting this important event.

I commend Secretary General Guterres and High Commissioner Grandi for their strong advocacy for refugee causes worldwide.

I would like to pay special tribute to President Erdogan and the people of Turkey for hosting the largest refugee population.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Pakistan was born out of the biggest refugee problem in the history of mankind. We were inspired by Prophet Muhammad (PHUH) who himself was once a refugee. Pakistan hosted millions of Afghans and is still hosting, after forty years, 1.4 million registered refugees and overall 3 million Afghans.

We are amongst the refugees hosting countries that do not have enough resources, cannot fully look after their own population, cannot provide their basic needs and are struggling to develop their human resource. In our countries, large refugee presence causes problems which cannot be imagined by the richer countries.

I see the European countries struggling with the refugee problems and I see the emergence of the right-wing which cashes in on the public distress, faced by the public because of lack of jobs, they cash in on the refugees. In Pakistan, we have

been through this. 4 million refugees and today almost 3 million refugees, in a country where there is massive unemployment, we know what we go through.

As Prime Minister, I can tell you that we face daily problems when people's economic resources, including jobs are shared by refugees. As a result, refugees can become targets.

I am proud of the people of Pakistan, for the way they have hosted the refugees and hospitality they have shown to the refugees for over forty years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

But the main point I want to make here today is that "prevention is better than cure". We must all try and prevent people from becoming refugees. Pakistan is and again I am proud to say that we are trying best for the peace process in Afghanistan so that the refugees can go back in dignity and we are praying that this peace process now succeeds and there is political settlement in Afghanistan, so that the people of Afghanistan who have been suffering for 40 years of conflict, finally they too can enjoy the dividends of peace.

One of the things that I want to speak about is that the world should be aware of one of the impending biggest refugee crises about to take place in India. On August 5, India laid siege of the people of Kashmir. 8 million people have been literally shut inside. Their rights have been violated, people have been imprisoned, their leaders are in jail, and all communication has been cut off. But the most important thing that the world needs to understand is that the professed aim to change the demography of Kashmir from Muslim majority to minority.

If this is the professed aim, we are likely to have another refugee crisis - a refugee crisis that would dwarf other crises. In the United Nations General Assembly, I tried to appeal to the world community that they must take notice of this.

What is going to happen, the people in siege in Kashmir, whenever curfew is lifted, there are 900,000 Indian troops. They will try to change the demography by settling in Hindu population in Kashmir. What is going to happen then?

We know from our past experience; prevention is better than cure. If the world acts right now and puts pressure on the Indian government to stop this illegal activity, we can prevent this crisis. Once the crisis starts, we all know, it is complicated and difficult to resolve.

I want the world community to take notice of is happening. We in Pakistan are not just worried that there will be a refugee crisis, we are worried that this will lead to a crisis – a crisis between two nuclear armed countries.

In Assam, under the National Citizen Register, every citizen has to prove his/her citizenship. This is what happened in Myanmar. Before the ethnic cleansing of Muslims started, they were all supposed to prove their citizenship first. This is what is happening in Assam.

In India, more than 2 million people, mostly Muslims, are now required to prove that they actually are citizens of India. And according to one of the Indian Ministers, by 2024 these measures will be implemented all over India.

Along with this act another law was recently passed, that from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, any minority that is persecuted can find citizenship in India, that means that anyone, except Muslims, can find citizenship in India. Therefore, if you put these two acts together, when this act is implemented all over India and every citizen has to prove citizenship— please understand the implications Mr. Secretary General.

There are more than 2 million Muslims in India, so anyone who cannot prove their registration will be de-registered as a citizen. Except that all other religions minorities Hindus, Sikhs, Christians they can come back and seek asylum in India so they can get citizenship but not Muslims. There are 200 million Muslims in India, if 2 or 3 % of them cannot prove their citizenship, where will they go?

Riots have already started in India and people are out in the streets. I would urge the international community to look into it because we know once the crisis happens, it is much more difficult to control it. It is much easier now for the world community to step in and see what is happening.

I urge them because we in Pakistan stand to suffer. Pakistan, as a country that is hosting 3 million refugees, while also trying to develop its human resource and provide them the basic necessities, will not be able to accommodate more refugees.

I have especially come here, Mr. Secretary General and High Commissioner. I urge this is the time for the world community to take notice. What is happening next door can have consequences, can have an impact on the refugee population of the world, which is unprecedented.

Secretary General, I am looking forward to seeing you in February, when we host the refugee conference.

Thank you.