



**Statement on behalf of OIC by Mr. Afaq Ahmad, Counsellor during Panel Discussion on Ensuring Equitable, Affordable, Timely and Universal Access for all Countries to Vaccines in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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**Mr. President,**

The OIC thanks all the panelists for their contributions.

COVID-19 pandemic has emerged as one of the greatest health calamities in the last one century. Recovering from its effects requires coordinated and commensurate responses, grounded in compassion and solidarity.

More than 6 million people have lost their lives. Around 120 million people have been pushed back to extreme poverty. While some of the poorest countries are struggling with low COVID-vaccine rates, hundreds of millions of vaccine doses purchased by the wealthy countries are at risk of going to waste.

These grim facts speak to the unprecedented yet avoidable human suffering. They also lay bare the deepening of inequalities and impeding capacities of states to ensure realization of rights and wellbeing of people, especially the most vulnerable among them.

Although the wider impacts are visible across the globe but the pandemic has disproportionately constrained developing countries' capacities to withstand its effects.

Vaccine inequity is the most visible manifestation of social and economic disparities of our times. It has exposed the continued existence of systemic and structural flaws that nurture discrimination in the global public health and financial systems. Unfortunately, lack of access to and timely availability of vaccine continues to impose devastating human costs. "Vaccine nationalism", "stockpiling of vaccine doses beyond legitimate needs" and continued reluctance to approve temporary waivers of patents cannot be ethically justified. These actions go against the core spirit of human values.

**Mr. President,**

To address multiple impacts of the COVID pandemic and achieve our shared objective to ensure enjoyment of human rights, we echo global calls for:

**One**, mobilization of international liquidity, concessional development and climate finance as well as debt relief.

**Two**, universal, timely and affordable access to vaccines by all as a public good and

**Three**, expediting progress towards early TRIPS waiver and removal of undue export restrictions to plug the gap between supply and demand and to ramp up vaccine production with a view to ensuring equity for all.

I thank you.