



**National statement delivered by Mr. Muneeb Ahmed, First Secretary, on
“Engaging the unengaged: Building inclusive development through a
meaningful civil society participation” during the 10th session of the Expert
Mechanism on the Right to Development**

(Geneva, 29 October 2024)

Distinguished Chair and members of the Expert Mechanism,

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

We welcome this thoughtful discussion on “Building inclusive development through a meaningful civil society participation”.

We are grateful for the panellists’ insights on the benefits and modes of enhanced engagement, as well as the limitations of various approaches.

I would briefly like to highlight Pakistan’s experience of grassroots engagement – which is the bedrock of civil society – for enhancing access to government services through the Citizens Portal.

Based in the Prime Minister’s Office, the Pakistan Citizens Portal is an online and smartphone-based complaint redressal mechanism with special emphasis on facilitating overseas Pakistanis, women, persons with disabilities, religious minorities, and foreigners.

The portal allows complainants to remain anonymous if they prefer, even as they engage with the relevant government departments for exchanging information.

In addition to supporting two-way communication and enhancing trust in government services, the Portal is a treasure trove of data for where service delivery – including upholding the human rights of our citizens – may be falling short of expectations and identifying the bottlenecks that need to be overcome.

In recent years, the Citizens Portal has been used by more than 4 million registered users. More than 4.8 million complaints have been addressed out of nearly 4.9 million total. Just to offer one data point: 35,000 users from religious minorities submitted more than 60,000 complaints pertaining to accessing municipal services, education, transportation, among others.

As the Citizens Portal demonstrates, digital technologies and tools have great potential for enhancing engagement – and amplifying voices as several panellists said – across the range of civil society actors. Pakistan Citizens Portal helps bring rightsholders even closer to the centre of government discourse, and empowers them to participate in, contribute to and benefit from development.

Thank you.