

ESCAP

Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Financing for Development
Third session Bangkok and online, 20–22 October 2021

Agenda 2: Towards an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economic recovery from the coronavirus disease pandemic

PAKISTAN INTERVENTION

Mr. Chairman,

Good Afternoon & Swadee Khub & Asalam-o-Alaikum,

*I will **NOT** repeat what my Minister said earlier- i.e about our GDP growth, tax-reforms, SDGs, micro-financing, climate change, green financing, and sustainable socio-economic development etc.*

Therefore, please allow me to primarily focus on the battle against the PANDEMIC, in line with the UN concept of “SHARING BEST PRACTISES”.

Like other countries in the region, Pakistan has also been hit significantly, by the COVID-19 pandemic. We were, however, able to save & salvage our economy to a greater extent, due to SMART LOCKDOWNS.

While Pakistan and the rest of the world scratched their heads over the question of to open or not open the economy ----- Pakistan quickly made a bold and rather *interesting* move to open the economy and enforced **smart lockdowns**. As the name suggests, it's been quite smart really: **lock down COVID-19 hotspots and let the rest follow the standard operating procedures.**

Allow me to mention two very scary international studies & reports:

- (1) An **Imperial College London study (June 2020)** indicated Pakistan could hit 13.6 million infections by end 2020 and 80,000 deaths by August 10, 2020, if it failed to fully lockdown.
- (2) A **Wall Street Journal's report dated 01 Aug 2020**, describing Pakistan as a coronavirus '**bright spot**', was being quoted extensively.

My Chairman,

Despite having the 5th highest population in the world, this has been a remarkable turnaround, despite the gory predictions of the awful toll the virus might have had.

I am happy to report that, Alhamd-o-illah, our deaths fortunately do not stand today at predicted 80,000 but has be controlled at **28, 300 Covid related deaths**. As you may be aware, the United Nations has also lauded Pakistan's declining numbers.

Mr. Chairman,

The staggering plunge in Pakistan's covid-19 cases has puzzled one and all, including international health experts. As far as the reason behind this decrease in cases is concerned, it could mainly be due to the following :

- (1) presence of a kind of “**non-specific immunity**” that is unique to the Pakistani people due to multiple exposures to various vaccines, including BCG and Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV), right from childhood;
- (2) **A Youth Bulge**: 63% of Pakistan 's population is 15 and 33 years of age.
- (3) **High humidity** in the monsoon season and a low transmission rate in the peak summer season could be some of the factors slowing down the COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan.

Pakistan may have won a couple of battles, but the war against this pandemic is far from over. Keeping the economy afloat while steering the country through a critical time is no mean feat, but winter is coming, and with it ---- the virus season.

So, what can Pakistan and other countries, especially the developing ones, do to ensure survival and turn their tales of misfortune into a happily-ever-after?

Rudyard Kipling might have the answer:

Now this is the Law of the Jungle—as old and as true as the sky;

And the Wolf that shall keep - it may prosper, but the Wolf that shall break - it must die.

As the creeper that girdles the tree-trunk, the Law runneth forward and back—
For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.

Rudyard Kipling basically emphasizes the crucial importance of cooperation and discipline in the society, by detailing the rights and responsibilities of the wolf pack, which in our case (as the Chinese delegate said) : is MULTILATERALISM.

Poetry aside,

Mr. Chairman,

In the end, Pakistan requests the Secretariat to continue with its **valued** research and support all of us, through **vital** technical assistance and **sustained** capacity building, in transforming our economies towards inclusive, common resilient, and sustainable pathways.

Thank you