

**Government of Pakistan
Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division
Press Release**

Pakistan and Chile co-host high-level poverty event at UNGA; 6 Heads of State and Government demonstrate commitment to tackle poverty



September 24, 2020: Pakistan and Chile co-hosted a very special event today titled, ‘Poverty at a crossroad: using leadership and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)’ at this year’s UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York to address the use of MPI and leadership to build back better as poverty reduction is currently at a crossroad. This high-level event was virtually convened on behalf of the Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (MPPN.org), a South-South network of senior officials from 60 national governments and 20 international institutions that champions the use of multidimensional poverty measures alongside monetary measures at both the national and global levels. The event was co-hosted by Karla Rubilar, Minister Social Development and Families, Chile and Dr. Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation, Pakistan.

The event brought together expertise and policy influence from 6 heads of state- Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Sebastian Piñera, President of Chile, Ashraf Ghani, President of Afghanistan, Carlos Alvarado Quesada, President of Costa Rica, Juan Orlando Hernández, President of Honduras and KP Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of Nepal.

Pakistan is emerging as a global leader in poverty alleviation. At the occasion, Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan addressed through a video message. Ehsaas being the massive social protection and poverty alleviation programme in the history of Pakistan was showcased to create awareness and work on the poverty alleviation discourse in collaboration with leaders from around the world.

Addressing the event, PM Imran Khan said, “In Pakistan, we have been able to control the virus through our strategy of smart lockdowns. My Government has done its utmost to shield the poor and the vulnerable. Despite our financial difficulties, we implemented a \$1.25 billion package to deliver emergency cash to over 15 million families, covering 120 million people.” Adding further, he said, “My Government is implementing a multisectoral poverty alleviation programme – Ehsaas (which means compassion in Urdu). It is the largest poverty eradication programme in Pakistan’s history. We are committed to reducing poverty from 24.3 per cent to 19 per cent by 2023. My aim is to create an Islamic welfare state – Riasat-e-Madina – through inclusive and equitable growth and economic modernization.”

Remarking at the session, SAPM Dr. Sania Nishtar said, “I want to begin by paying rich tribute to the OPHI and the Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network not only for their thought leadership in introducing a new metric for measuring poverty but also for their efforts to institutionalize its adoption. COVID-19 is threatening to wipe out the development gains of the last century and in doing so it is also reversing three decades of gains in poverty eradication.”

Continuing, she said, “In my own country, Pakistan within 10 days of the lockdown, our government committed over a billion dollars to deliver emergency cash to over 15 million families. As our PM just mentioned, this is the largest program in Pakistan’s history, delivered end-to-end, digitally in the most difficult of circumstances. Our experience with Ehsaas, has taught us that it is possible to make quantum changes in the delivery capability of governments, but in order for that to happen, bold policy, good data, and an unwavering commitment to integrity and transparency in delivery, and whole of government mobilization is a must—and that has been the cornerstone of our poverty alleviating work.”

At the event, a demonstrated commitment was convened to address the multidimensional effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of people living in multidimensional poverty. Global leaders from six countries brought rich poverty perspective to the table and discussed innovative uses of MPIs as a policy tools during the crisis to drive efficiency, targeting, and coordination for the response agenda.

Alongside, the scheduled ministerial and institutional panel with 11 experts provided an engaging venue to the global community of leaders and innovative thinkers for collaboration aimed at tackling poverty. And the discussion made a collective call for collaboration to turn the corner on poverty during this tragic pandemic and recession, by creatively redefining policies that are implemented aiming to reduce poverty in all its dimensions.