

Peace Message: The Wealthy Countries Must Stand with the Poorer Countries

Yousaf Raza Gillani

October 2020

Prime Minister of Pakistan from 2008 to 2012



Asalaam alaikum, good morning! Distinguished Leaders, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to speak at this prestigious forum. I am thankful to the co-founder of Universal Peace Federation, Mother Moon, for her unflinching and steadfast commitment to promoting peace and harmony. The Universal Peace Federation has once again displayed great initiative in convening a dialogue on an issue that is not only the most important and urgent at present but also an issue that can transform our world in profound ways in the future.

This can be a critical point in history and how we respond to the threat of the global pandemic, Covid-19, and the lessons we learn from this experience are of critical importance. I speak as a survivor of Covid-19. The experience humbles me for the care that I received, but it also makes me acutely aware of the plight of those who have been less fortunate. I hope and pray that a vaccination is available soon and we collectively defeat this virus. The challenge of Covid-19 is a challenge for all humanity.

Any effective response can be based on coordination, universal values and a spirit of working together. We have an opportunity to realize our common bonds of humanity. The pandemic threatens us all and we can only overcome this together. Over years and decades, we have overcome famines, plagues and wars and we have done it together.

The aftermath of the First World War saw the formation of the League of Nations. The destruction wreaked by the Second World War led to the creation of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today, we need to again pool our resources, expertise, energies and compassion to work toward a world which is safe, kind and just. My country, Pakistan, faces enormous challenges and has been one of the countries worst affected by Covid-19. However, the people of Pakistan have displayed exceptional courage and resilience in the face of a struggling economy, a deadly pandemic, possible food insecurity caused by locust attacks and regional conflicts. Our Doctors, nurses and paramedical staff have sacrificed their lives to protect ours.

The Covid-19 crisis is an opportunity to reflect upon on priorities as leaders and as countries. We have a choice. The choice is between polarization, division, hatred -- and unity, love and kindness. With unprecedented challenges come unprecedented opportunities. Today, there is an opportunity for the world, particularly the wealthy countries, to stand with countries that do not have the resources to fight this on their own. The debts of low-income countries should be restructured to give them an opportunity to save the lives and livelihoods of their people.

The vaccine should belong to humanity, to everyone. We need to do more than just survive this pandemic. We must emerge from it stronger, better, and kinder than before. Other common challenges to humanity such as climate change, extreme poverty, and lack of access to education need to be fought successfully before it is too late. We have the opportunity to start the journey of founding a world based on brotherhood and empathy. We should seize this opportunity. I am hopeful that we will.

Thank you