

## **Permanent Mission of Pakistan**

Thank you, Madame Chair, Pakistan welcomes the team of this year's forum.

Societies have long coped with intolerance, exclusion, and violence targeting minorities. However, social media platforms have led the proverbial rule of adding fuel to the fire. Now with a single click, hate-based ideologies spreading propaganda and dehumanization campaigns can reach millions of people in a few seconds. This seamless connectivity coincides with the disturbing inflection of foreign industry.

Today, populism has become the currency of politics. The use of populist rhetoric for electoral gains has amped amplification to both mainstream and social media. More worrying, in certain cases, public leaders and the state machinery are both accomplices in inciting violence against minorities, creating a culture of impunity.

In our neighboring country, the war has witnessed the Human Rights impact of these sobering headlines. In late February 2020, over three dozen Muslims were murdered, and hundreds wounded in its national capital in broad daylight at the hands of right-wing individuals. These horrendous acts of violence carried over the course of three days, and these cult-Sate sanctions were triggered by hate speech by one, after ruling party leaders.

Another systemic issue is the prioritization by social media companies of profit motives over human rights principles and responsibilities. According to media reports, Facebook chose not to remove hateful posts by several ultranationalist leaders in one county of our region to safeguard its business interests.

Advocacy for reasonable regulation is often stonewalled in defense of freedom of expression and opinion. This has in turn stopped progress in crafting sensible, multistakeholder response measures against the growing problem of hate speech. The hate pandemic in wake of the COVID emergency has again highlighted the urgency to address the drivers and the platforms that are used as vehicles to promote hatred against minorities.

We hope that the discussion at the forum will address these complex but necessary debates to both, for tech freedom of expression and combat hate speech, foster governance, make online places safe, and close protection towards individuals and groups vulnerable to human rights consequences of this curse. I thank you, Madame Chair.