



**Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN
Geneva**

Statement

72nd Session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR

**OIC Statement under Agenda Item 4 (a)
(07 October, 2021)**

Honourable Chairperson,

My delegation is delivering the statement in its capacity as Coordinator of OIC Group on Humanitarian Affairs.

The OIC countries¹ wish to refer to the UNHCR's Note on "International Protection" (A/AC.96/1211) and underline that this document reflects the Secretariat's point of view only. It is not reflective of the position of Member States. These aspects may be clearly spelled out in the document now and in the future.

We note the efforts of UNHCR Secretariate in issuing a revised version of this Note to address the concerns of delegations, however, some concerns persist.

The OIC group expresses its rejection of this document and records serious concerns for the following reasons:

First, we are disappointed that this document conveniently ignores the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers such as stereotyping, stigmatization, hate-speech and in some cases violence against them on the basis of religion or belief, particularly those living in the western countries and other parts of the world.

Second, we are disappointed that UNHCR has chosen to focus on one dimension of the narrative, based on the views expressed by UN Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

¹ Except Albania.

Thirdly, we completely reject the assertion made in paragraph 30 of the document singling out and incriminating ‘many host countries’ due to artificially hyped-up protection risks and stigmatization threat.

Fourthly, we also have serious reservations on UNHCR’s engagement with UN Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, who carries a controversial mandate from the Human Rights Council and to which many of OIC countries have not subscribed to. We caution UNHCR against its interaction with UN Experts holding controversial mandates which are often politically charged.

Chairperson,

In view of these considerations, the OIC countries would like to advise UNHCR to refrain from promoting politically controversial mandates in its work, and distance itself from lending its direct or indirect support or acquiescence to controversial concepts that may negatively affect its operations and cause avoidable frictions.

The mandate and operations of UNHCR should remain apolitical and based on the universally agreed humanitarian principles of objectivity, neutrality, impartiality and humanity. Bringing in politically sensitive and controversial notions, concepts and language by the Secretariat can raise questions about the neutral character of UNHCR.

The OIC Group expects UNHCR to present an objective picture without making judgments using colored lenses.

Chairperson,

The OIC countries accord high importance to the work of UNHCR. Many are refugee hosts, countries of origin and donors. The OIC countries host more than two-third of the total refugee population in the world. The concerns, interests and priorities of OIC countries in the matters of UNHCR are, therefore, self-explanatory. Many of the largest operations of UNHCR are in OIC countries.

The OIC countries look forward to continuing to contribute to the work of UNHCR, in accordance with the principle of international burden and responsibility sharing while upholding the apolitical norms of humanitarian work and principles.

I thank you
