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**Impact of Covid-19 on the World Drug Problem
*Prevention and Recovery in Uncertain Times***

It is my great pleasure to present the Karim Khan Afridi Welfare Foundation-Pakistan's statement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The worldwide drug crisis is worse than previously thought. With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the world drug problem has become the most urgent public health challenge with its wide-ranging impact in Pakistan and worldwide.

In the past one year, the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic are showing the world multi-faceted suffering on a magnitude that is unprecedented in living memory. The pandemic comes on the back of a trend of already rising drug use, up 30 percent from a decade earlier, hitting more fiercely in developing countries. The restrictive measures introduced to mitigate the spread of the virus and, the resulting extensive economic downturn have threatened to compound drug dangers further still. The world is seeing a reduction in priority and funding to fight the drug problem, which is a cause of high concern. Rising violence against women, social distancing, a lack of economic opportunities, have increased the chances of people turning to activities linked to drugs.

Border closures and other measures linked to the virus have already caused shortages of drugs on the street, leading to higher prices and reduced purity. This could lead to an overall increase in a shift towards cheaper and more harmful products. The gradual legalization of cannabis and related substances may induce more mental health issues.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For Pakistan, sitting on one of the world's busiest drug trafficking corridors, with an estimated over 9 million users and close to 5 million addicts - and home to 130 million at risk youth under 30, it is a priority to keep its young population away from drugs.

With Covid -19 adding more disturbance in our lives, we need all governments to show greater solidarity and provide support to developing countries most of all, in offering evidence-based services for drug use disorders, with a focus on more Prevention and Psychological support services.

The Countdown to achieving the SDGs by 2030 has begun.

KKAWF commits to undertake and focus on combatting with solutions and solidarity the new and old harms that drug use brings. We need to take action now for a better future for all.

Thank you.