To
Major General (Ret.) Amir Azeem Bajwa,
Chairman,
Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)   9 April 2020

Subject: Asia Internet Coalition (AIC) Letter of Support During Covid-19 Outbreak

Dear General Bajwa,

In the face of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, The Asia Internet Coalition (AIC) wishes to express its solidarity with the Government of Pakistan and its people at this difficult time.

In the face of widespread disruption to all aspects of society including commerce, education, trade, and livelihoods, we note the government's recently announced national financial stimulus package aimed at mitigating negative economic impacts, as well as supporting communities, businesses, workers, and vulnerable segments of society.

With businesses, schools, communities and societies disrupted, technology is already playing a significant role in supporting the public sector – especially healthcare services – in its outreach, delivery of essential services, and public communication.

Our members have taken numerous steps to support the community during this time. These include working with authoritative sources to ensure accurate fact-based information is shared, working with national health authorities and health experts to support public information efforts, supporting local businesses to thrive online, enabling productivity for remote workers and students, and using technology to limit misinformation and reduce fraud. **Details are appended separately.**

As Pakistan braces for the difficult months ahead and plans for the next phase of recovery, we are confident that the internet and digital technology will be a major support to economic rebuilding, given the tremendous economic opportunities it offers by supporting access and connectivity, digital skills and literacy, and innovation for Pakistani SMEs and entrepreneurs.

As strong supporters of the Digital Pakistan initiative, we stand ready to provide technology advisory and support to Pakistan, as it considers harnessing technology as part of its overall approach to fighting COVID-19. Our best wishes.

Yours Sincerely,

Jeff Paine
Managing Director ,
Asia Internet Coalition (AIC)
www.aicasia.org

Cc:

- **Dr. Shireen M. Mazari, Federal Minister for Human Rights**
- **Mr. Shoaib Ahmad Siddiqui, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Information Technology & Telecommunication**
- **Mr. Eazaz Aslam Dar, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT)**
- **Ms. Tania Aidrus, Member of Strategic Reforms Implementation Unit, Prime Minister's Office, Islamabad**
- **Barrister Syed Ali Zafar, Chairman ILF Pakistan**
- **Dr. Arslan Khalid, Focal Person to the Prime Minister on Digital Media, Prime Minister's Office, Islamabad**

APPENDIX

The AIC members have taken action to safeguard public safety, health and well-being in the face of the COVID-19 outbreak. The following is a non-exhaustive list that highlights just of few of the many initiatives our members have undertaken:

A. **Keeping people and health professionals equipped with reliable information**

- **Keeping people in Pakistan safe and informed:** Facebook is working with the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination (NHSRC) and leading world organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF to provide accurate information about COVID-19. Anyone who searches for information related to the virus on Facebook or on Instagram is shown educational pop-ups on top of search results connecting them to health organizations. We've also helped the NHSRC boost key messages about COVID-19 on Facebook.
- **Information in local language:** Recently, Facebook launched a Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information Center in English and Urdu to act as a central hub for people to find reliable information from trusted health authorities like the NHSRC. This was coupled with a launch of WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Hub to provide simple, actionable guidance for health workers, educators, community leaders, nonprofits, local governments and businesses in Pakistan.
- **Helping users find useful information:** Google is continuing to develop new resources to connect users to helpful information and resources. These include expansion of COVID-19 SOS Alerts and Knowledge Panels on Google Search, as well as YouTube Information Panels. These products link to Pakistan's covid.gov.pk website, to provide locally relevant information to Pakistani citizens. Google is also providing **$5,000,000 USD** in ad grants to help the Government of Pakistan share information on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other measures to help local communities.
- On the occasion of World Health Day, and in partnership with WHO, Twitter launched dedicated hashtags and emoji (active in Urdu ‏ورلڈ_ہیلتھ_ڈے# ‏گھر_رہو# ‏گھر_میں_رہو#) for people to stay home.

- **Global expansion of the COVID-19 search prompt:** Twitter launched six days before the official designation of the virus in January 2020. We continue to expand our dedicated search prompt feature to ensure that when you come to the service for information about COVID-19, you are met with credible, authoritative content at the top of search. Twitter has been consistently monitoring the conversation on the service to make sure keywords — including common misspellings — also generate the search prompt.
- Twitter has been working to keep you safe, connected, and informed on the platform as we all face the COVID-19 pandemic. For specifics on what Twitter has been doing in response to this health emergency, visit the blog. This [page](#) is continuously updated.

B. **Supporting health experts in Pakistan:**

- Facebook is supporting the NHSRC, together with a local Pakistani developer Botsify.com, to launch an [Automated Messenger Experience](#) to keep people up to date on the COVID-19 situation.
- WhatsApp also partnered with NHSRC to launch a [WhatsApp Corona Helpline](#) in 6 local languages in Pakistan.
- Google has launched **Community Mobility Reports** that aim to provide insights into what has changed in response to policies aimed at combating COVID-19. The reports chart movement trends over time by geography, across different categories of places such as retail and recreation, groceries and pharmacies, parks, transit stations, workplaces, and residential. Google hopes that these aggregated, anonymized insights will be helpful as Pakistani public health officials make critical decisions to combat COVID-19.

C. **Empowering local businesses, workers and students in Pakistan:**

- Facebook made it easy to find help, support and resources through our Business Resource Hub: www.facebook.com/resource
- In Pakistan, Facebook is hosting webinars to educate clients about the changes in user behaviours during COVID-19 to help cope with changing tides.
- Google has launched [Grow with Google Pakistan](#) – a hub with tools and resources for remote workers of all kinds. For educators, they have created new distance learning resources, including a [collection of training materials](#), a new [YouTube Learning Hub](#), and [Teach from Home](#) – a website that aggregates helpful tools and resources for teachers to take the classroom online. For adult learners, Google is offering [Primer](#), a free app that includes fast and easy lessons on business, marketing, management, and more that can be done in just five minutes during a busy day (English only).

D. **Limiting the spread of misinformation:**

- Globally, Facebook is removing content with claims and conspiracy theories that have been debunked by the WHO or other credible health experts and could cause harm to people who believe them. The third-party fact-checkers, including in Pakistan, are continuing their work debunking false claims related to the coronavirus. Some examples can be found here: [https://factcheck.afp.com/afp-pakistan.](https://factcheck.afp.com/afp-pakistan)
- **Ads policy for COVID-19:** In response to the shifting advertising landscape, and in order to support helpful causes during this time, Twitter now is allowing managed clients and

partners to advertise content containing implicit or explicit reference to COVID-19 in some use cases, with restrictions.

- **Broadening our definition of "harm":** Twitter has broadened our definition of harm to address content that goes directly against guidance from authoritative sources of global and local public health information.
- **Leveraging automated technology:** Twitter has increased our use of machine learning and automation to take a wide range of actions on potentially abusive and manipulative content.
- **Zero-tolerance approach to platform manipulation:** To support that mission, Twitter's global Trust & Safety team is continuing its zero-tolerance approach to platform manipulation and any other attempts to abuse our service at this critical juncture.
- As part of the [Inappropriate Content Policy,](#) Twitter halted any attempt by advertisers to opportunistically use the COVID-19 outbreak to target inappropriate ads. Government entities that want to disseminate public health information will be permitted to promote ads on COVID-19. In the case of COVID-19, Twitter has put additional safeguards into place in order to facilitate the sharing of trusted public health information and to reduce potential harm to users.

E. Leveraging multi-stakeholder partnerships

- **Protecting and supporting journalists:** Right now, every journalist is a COVID-19 journalist. Twitter has donated US$1 million dollars evenly distributed between the Committee to Protect Journalists and the International Women's Media Foundation. These funds will be used to ensure these organizations can continue their work in the face of new economic strains and to directly support journalists.
- **Promoting proper handwashing with the #SafeHands emoji - Tweet [here](#)**
  #AdsForGood for support and additional protections