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**High Level Consultative Meeting on
Water Related Sustainable Development Goals & their Implementation**

Ambassador Hall, Marriot Hotel, Islamabad

Thursday, 26th May 2016

Sustainable Development Policy Institute is currently part of a programme - 'Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio' - that aimed to address the issues of water, food, and energy security in South Asia through better regional cooperation, policy reforms, technology transfer and capacity building targeting the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly women and girls. As part of this programme, a key component focuses on the water sector conservation and irrigation issues, which have also been highlighted in SDG-6.

Though several initiatives have been taken at national and sub-national level to address the priority areas under SDG-6, it is important to note that the overall water sector governance still remains fragmented, in turn leading to a waste of scarce resources and less than expected outcomes. SDPI has prepared a mapping exercise which tries to capture the post-18th Amendment legal, regulatory and governance framework in water sector. This exercise aimed at revisiting the political economy of water sector and improving the signaling, coordination and implementation systems required for better outcomes in water sector development projects.

This high-level consultation was held to bring expert advice to the mapping exercise so that further improvements may be made.



Panelists:

Mr Naseer Gillani, Chair of Pakistan Water Partnership, Chief Water, Planning Commission

Former Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chair of Board of Governors, Sustainable Development Policy Institute

Dr Abid Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute



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Mr Jan Achakzai, Political Analyst

Ms Anam A. Khan, Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute

Moderator:

Dr Vaqar Ahmed, Deputy Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute

Dr Suleri inaugurated the consultation by welcoming the audience. He said over the years, water has gained socio-economic importance in Pakistan. “Water is mainly used for irrigation, power generation and drinking. Even in Islamabad, the federal capital of the country, we are to rely on bottled water, which speaks volumes about the situation of drinking water in other parts the country. He stressed the need for some sort of regulations over the discovery of water sites. Further, he pointed out that trans-boundary water issues across provinces are as sensitive as the same issues across countries, but the former are usually ignored. Dr Abid suggested that cost-benefit analysis should be carried out while exporting crops keeping in mind the amount of water, which is used to grow crops (particularly rice). He thanked the Australian High Commission to come up with the idea of studying water, food and energy nexus.

Ms Anam A. Khan started her presentation by saying that the water sector gained major focus in development programmes during the last decade. She said that despite the Water Apportionment Accord of 1991 and presence of Indus River System Authority (IRSA), both Sindh and Punjab provinces have evolved serious conflicts over water distribution, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan are striving to build their capacity to fully utilize their sanctioned water share. She further said the 18th Amendment has given more power and autonomy to provinces regarding water management resources. Ms Khan listed some public sector institutions dealing with water, including Ministry of Water and Power, WAPDA, IRSA and the Planning Commission as major institutions. Listing the legal frameworks governing water resources in Pakistan, she said some provinces have legal umbrella structures while others have devolved legal policies but that don’t assure efficient water management. Discussing some water-related projects, she said: In the Punjab, there is a New Khanki Barrage Construction Project, in KPK the is the remodeling of Warsak canal system and in Balochistan the prominent projects are: Kachi canal, Mirani Dam and Sabakzai Dam. In Sindh, she continued, some flagship projects include: Sindh Water Sector Improvement and Sindh On-farm Water Management project. Ms Khan said it is most important to align water sector goals with development objectives. For instance, the draft National Water Policy should be aligned with the Vision 2025. Stressing the need for aligning these goals with the budgets, she said irrigation and conservation reforms/projects also need to be backed by prioritizing these measures in the federal budget. At the end, she raised the following questions to be discussed in the next session.



- How can water governance across federal, provincial and inter-provincial domains be strengthened?
- How can the human resource/capacities in water sector irrigation and conservation programmes be strengthened?
- How can Pakistan optimize water resources planning and management?

Mr Naseer Gillani said that it is a global achievement that water has a separate goal defined for itself in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He said one point which is usually missed in water discussions is the transformation from irrigation to non-irrigation activities. Drinking water supply should be the highest priority, but it is also important to assure that water is free from contamination, which means it is safe for drinking purpose. Reiterating his previous viewpoint, he said that more than 50% people in Gujranwala suffer from hepatitis due to poor sanitation. In Faisalabad, he added, heavy metal industries release their waste in water, which is consumed by the local population; so the drinking water over there has arsenic, and heavy metals. He added that the reliability of water-related data is also questionable; data given to decision-makers is often obsolete.

Mr Gillani pointed out that even today majority of rural areas don't have sufficient sanitation systems. Talking about water scarcity, he said that Europe and North America won't be affected by water scarcity as they are rich in water resources, whereas the Middle East and South Asia will be affected as they lack these resources. "Pakistan needs membrane technology, which is essential these days for integrated water management. Apart from the authorities, he said that it is our social and moral responsibility as individuals to reduce water wastage, for example some of us wash our cars by using drinking water. Another area requiring attention is the governance structure of communities, but unfortunately, the present local government set up is not fully synchronized with the needs of local communities. Nepotism prevails among the local governments, where the local representatives are seen serving local *waderas* (landlords) having hold on water..

Mr Jan Achakzai said that water is a matter of life and death for Pakistan, as it is a country largely dependent on agriculture. Though the services sector has an increased share in the GDP, the main focus should remain on agriculture. Referring to a case study of Israel, he said that he would love to see some people studying the same and learn as to how Israeli experts solved their water crisis.

Discussion Session

- Mr Rashid Khalid: We now have F1 variety seeds, so what are the panelists' views on those? Also is GM Foods verified and up to the par? Mr Naseer Gillani responded that the government has certain limitations, but the civil society should own this issue.



- SDPI Advisor Dr Mahmood Khwaja: Water is contaminated through bacterial practices in our culture. Why do we have to go for outside technologies when we have equally efficient local technologies? Is government working towards promoting local practices which are cost effective as well?
- Mr Aftab: In Pakistan, 80% diseases are water-borne. Water should be owned by the community. Somebody should make a close contact with the Punjab government in order to ensure that water powers are delegated to Saaf Pani Project. Mr Naseer Gillani agreed with Mr Aftab and also praised Mr Wattoo for his efforts to improve water situation in the Punjab.
- Senior journalist Mr Shahid: Regarding the Indus Water Treaty do we know how much water is flowing through the three rivers we have? How much water from these rivers is consumed and how much is used for irrigation purposes?
Shafqat Kakakhel responded that in the Indus Water Treaty, India was allowed limited use of water from the western rivers. At that time the three western rivers had actually carried more than 20% of the resources of the basin.
- SDPI Research Fellow Dr Imran Khalid: We still don't have a water policy in Pakistan. If it comes out, disaster management should be the part of it. Owing to population growth, people are building homes close to rivers and sometimes even in the pathway of rivers.
- Ms Fauzia Malik from IUCN: Are we thinking about the recharge of ground water?
Mr Naseer Gillani responded yes, we need to recharge ground water, and about 100 dams are being constructed in Balochistan for this purpose.
- Mr Manzoor Kakakhel: What is the right medium to resolve this issue? Planning Commission or some other body? There is a lot of confusion regarding the management of water resources in Pakistan.
- Mr Habib Leghari (Lodhran Pilot Project): If we want to save our drinking water, we will have to adopt a communal approach. Why don't we find a local seed in our local communities?

Former Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, while speaking on the way forward, said that SDGs constitute global consensus over 2030 global development agenda. He said the realization that Pakistan is facing a serious water crisis and the per capita availability of water is dwindling is a good thing. "We also recognize the challenge of improving water infrastructure in the country," he said, adding that a satisfactory solution of trans-boundary water management must be ensured. "Water-related targets and goals are contained in a number of frameworks. Water was a concurrent subject, but since the concurrent list is abolished, now it's a provincial subject." He called upon the politicians and legislators



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to help improve the water resource management in the country. "We should cater to the human and technological needs of water sector. He expressed concern over the fact that out of five Joint Secretaries of the Ministry of Water and Power, only one deals with water. He said that Pakistan has signed the SDGs, therefore, it is incumbent on Pakistan to contribute towards the achievement of perhaps the most important framework of the SDGs, which is related to water.

