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From Fragility to Resilience: Enhancing Sustainable Development

27th Sustainable Development Conference

4 - 7 November 2024 | Islamabad, Pakistan



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Assisted by: Tayyaba Hanif, Romila Qamar and Asim Zahoor

Bulletin designed by: Asim Zahoor and Umair Hassan

27th SDC thematic poster designed by: Umair Hassan

SDPI's Twenty-seventh Sustainable Development Conference: A Recap From Fragility to Resilience: Enhancing Sustainable Development

4 – 7 November 2024 | Islamabad | Pakistan

Twenty-seventh Sustainable Development Conference: The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) held its 27th annual Sustainable Development Conference (SDC) from 4 – 7 November 2024 at the Pakistan-China Friendship Centre, Islamabad, Pakistan. The overarching theme of the mega event was “From Fragility to Resilience: Enhancing Sustainable Development”. This year’s SDC was held in knowledge partnership with the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Government of Pakistan.

Over the past years, SDCs are being held in a hybrid format as did this one. Some speakers joined the sessions online and so did the audience. Sessions were streamed live and recordings have also been made available for later viewing.

The theme of this year’s Conference reflected SDPI’s commitment to addressing contemporary global challenges through resilience and sustainable development at 52 sessions of which 11 were high-level plenary sessions, 29 concurrent sessions and 12 fireside chats spread over four days. SDPI’s 27th SDC was attended by over 300 panellists from 14 countries. Besides Pakistan, speakers joined the sessions from

Bangladesh, China, Germany, India, Italy, Kenya, Nepal, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, UK and the USA. All the sessions had a keen and interactive audience. H.E. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, the then Acting President; and Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan, was the Chief Guest at the Inaugural Plenary on 4 November 2024. An audience of over 2,300 attended the four-day conference.

Building on its legacy, the annual Conference served as a beacon, illuminating the path from fragility to resilience. It analysed how vulnerabilities could be transformed into strengths and how innovations could drive adaptability, growth, and development. By converging diverse minds in the shared pursuit of resilience and innovation, the Conference sought to turn challenges into opportunities in the ever-changing world.

SDC Anthology: The latest SDC Anthology titled “Light at the End of the Tunnel: Hope in Times of Despair” jointly published by SDPI and Sang-e-Meel was launched at the SDC 2024. The anthology is available for download from the given link: <https://sdpi.org/sdconference/963/publications>.



Second Sustainability Investment Expo: Alongside the SDC, the 2nd Sustainability Investment Expo (SIE) was also held which brought together 35 companies/organisations from the development and private sector – key players in the design, production, and management of sustainability products, services, and initiatives. Apart from these groups, development partners, including multilateral institutions wishing to invest in high-impact avenues, set up their knowledge booths and showcased their work.

SDPI's Sustainability Awards: The Sustainable Development Policy Institute hosted the Sustainability Awards 2024 alongside the Sustainability Investment Expo and the 27th Sustainable Development Conference, celebrating remarkable achievements in advancing sustainable development. With over 100 submissions received — 48% from corporate entities, 37% from higher education institutions,

12% from CSOs, and 4% from others — the awards highlighted exceptional contributions across eight categories. Winners included Habib Bank Limited for Sustainability Education Innovator, NED University of Engineering and Technology for Water Conservation Green Innovation, Fauji Cement Company Limited for Renewable Energy, Concept Loop for Circular Economy, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund for Gender Equality, Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited for Agri-Tech and Food Security, Artistic Milliners for Production Innovation and Decarbonization, and MG Apparel (Mahmood Group) for Social Impact and Community Engagement. A strong jury, guided by a rigorous triple-blind peer review process, evaluated nominations using the triple-bottom-line approach (Environmental, Social, and Governance - ESG) to ensure fairness and excellence in the selection process.

Recap by Uzma T. Haroon and Romila Qamar

About the Bulletin

This bulletin provides comprehensive summary of the dialogues and discussions held during the Conference. It highlights the key themes explored and the insights shared by participants. Moreover, it provides the key policy recommendations derived from these deliberations, serving as an important resource for stakeholders and policymakers.

Acknowledgements

A special thanks to the team of rapporteurs and media professionals deputed to cover the sessions for their valuable contribution in the compilation of policy recommendations and press releases. Press releases can be further viewed at the given link: [https://](https://sdpi.org/sdconference/from-fragility-to-resilience-enhancing-sustainable-development/pressrelease)

sdpi.org/sdconference/from-fragility-to-resilience-enhancing-sustainable-development/pressrelease

Policy recommendations featuring in this Bulletin have been curated by **Sarah Siddiq Aneel**. These recommendations were drawn from the thematic sessions and plenaries of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute's Twenty-seventh Sustainable Development Conference held in November 2024.

The dedication and invaluable support from **Tayyaba Hanif, Romila Qamar, Asim Zahoor, Amber Tasawwur and Umair Hassan** in handling the various aspects that go into preparing this Bulletin are much appreciated. This year's Conference poster has been designed by **Umair Hassan**.



Glimpses of the Sustainable Investment Expo: Ribbon Cutting and Awards Ceremony



SDC Anthology

Light at the End of the Tunnel: Hope in Times of Despair

Light at the End of the Tunnel: Hope in Times of Despair was launched at the Inaugural Plenary of the 27th Sustainable Development Conference on 4 November 2024. It has been jointly published by SDPI and Sang-e-Meel. Please contact Ali Aamer at aliaaamer@sdpi.org (051 - 2278134) to obtain its copy. It can also be downloaded from the following link: <https://sdpi.org/sdconference/963/publications>.

Book Blurb: The anthology is a unique collection that proposes contemporary policy pathways from leading experts across Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Nepal, and the United States. With focus on charting a path toward sustainable and inclusive growth, the volume breaks new ground by presenting innovative solutions integrating local realities with global perspectives. Each chapter outlines actionable strategies that seek to transform the socioeconomic landscape of emerging economies (with special focus on Pakistan) and foster resilience in the face of today's complex challenges. The book is structured around six major themes:

Economic Development and Reform: This section proposes strategic reforms to address Pakistan's macroeconomic challenges, streamline governance, and foster regional connectivity. From privatisation to comprehensive tax reforms, the authors advocate for long-term planning and investments in human capital, targeting sectors such as SMEs, innovation economy, and services for inclusive growth.

Energy and Environmental Sustainability: With a focus on transitioning to clean energy, these chapters analyse adoption of renewable energy, green financing, and circular economy principles. Recommendations urge modernising textile industries, managing waste, and reducing reliance on fossil fuels - all while fostering international collaborations and regional clean energy projects.

Decade of BRI and CPEC: Reflecting on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), this section highlights the economic and geopolitical opportunities they present. Writers pragmatically argue leveraging technology transfer,

infrastructure development, and strategic partnerships to drive sustainable economic growth while addressing environmental concerns and regional cooperation.

Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture: Tackling the urgent issues of food security and climate-smart agriculture, the authors propose modern technological integration and gender inclusivity in agricultural practices. The writings discuss the importance of resilient food systems, better water management, and incentives for private sector engagement to promote sustainable agricultural productivity and combat climate change.

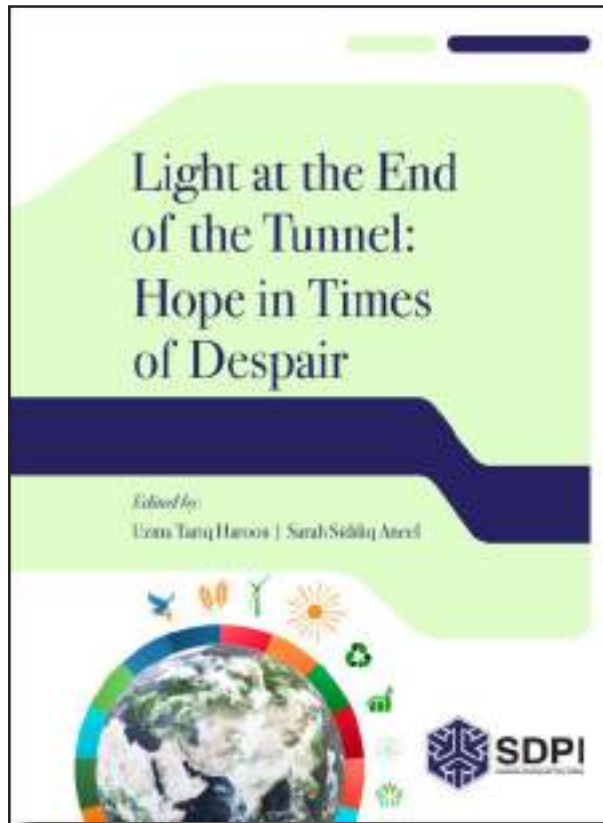
Social Equity and Empowerment: This theme centres on gender equality, financial inclusion, and social protection. It offers solutions to empower women, integrate gender considerations into economic and environmental policies, and promote inclusive governance. Special attention is given to improving healthcare, education, and vocational training to drive social equity and community resilience.

Governance and Policy Challenges: With a focus on governance reform, this section explores capacity building, decentralisation, and institutional transparency. The authors from Pakistan and Nepal present a detailed roadmap for enhancing policy continuity, economic stability and accountability in public service while promoting innovative approaches to counter extremism and boost civic engagement.

Light at the End of the Tunnel is a compelling anthology that reimagines traditional policy frameworks and

offers practical approaches for policymakers, scholars and practitioners to realign the future trajectory of sustainable development. While acknowledging the enormity of local challenges, the volume makes a compelling call for action, stressing that no country can tackle these issues in isolation. It urges regional and global cooperation to build a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable world for the generations to come.

Book Blurb by Sarah Siddiq Aneel



Sustainable Development Conference: A View Through the Lens



Inaugural Plenary 1.1:

From Fragility to Resilience: Enhancing Sustainable Development

Master of Ceremony: Dr Khalid Waleed, Research Fellow, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Welcome Remarks: Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairperson, Board of Governors, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Welcome Remarks: Ms Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC), Government of Pakistan

Introductory Note: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Chief Guest: Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, Acting President and Chairman Senate, Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Launch of Publications:

- Light at the End of the Tunnel: Hope in Times of Despair
- The Keeper of the Lighthouse: A Migrant's Story by Raheel Yawar (Biographies & Memoirs: Brig. Mohammad Yasin Retd.)

Plenary Organisers: Mr Hassan Murtaza & Mr Asim Zahoor, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Sania Panezai & Mr Aftab Hameed Mirani

Video Link: <https://www.facebook.com/sdpiPakistan/videos/559705393310991>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Acting President and Senate Chairman, **H.E. Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani**, stressed that Pakistan faced significant challenges from climate change, which were the main obstacles to achieving sustainable development.

H.E. Gilani said the country had made commendable strides towards climate governance and sustainable development as the national climate and sustainable

development policy outlined a comprehensive strategy to address resilience, mitigation, poverty alleviation, women empowerment, agriculture, water resources, and energy efficiency.

On food insecurity, the Acting President called for developing a resilient food system that could withstand climate shocks and ensure food security for all.

He said tough economic decisions taken by the

Government had set the country on a path to economic stability.

H.E. Gilani said Pakistan had been passing through a 'polycrisis', and the immense struggle and sacrifices made by the citizens and the weight of tough economic decisions borne by the government could not be overlooked.

He said an imminent default was averted thanks to the sustained efforts of the present Government to stabilise the economy. He pointed out that Pakistan had linked its Vision 2025 to the SDGs to demonstrate commitment towards achieving sustainable development outcomes for a wider human well-being.

The 5Es Framework by the planning ministry also defined Pakistan's short to medium-term strategy on exports, e-governance, environment and climate change, energy, infrastructure, equity and empowerment, he added.

The Acting President told the gathering that the Benazir Income Support Programme had provided financial assistance to millions of vulnerable families while additional economic reforms were being introduced to reduce poverty and promote inclusive growth.

Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, **Ms Romina Khurshid Alam**, said the impacts of climate

change. She said the Chief Minister had called for joint action by both Pakistan and India to save their people from smog and other climatic hazards, she said.

Ms Alam said climate-induced loss and damage demanded urgent action and finance, with estimates suggesting that economic losses in developing countries could reach \$1-1.8 trillion annually by 2050.

She affirmed the Government's commitment to building resilience under the guidance of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, highlighting the Government's efforts to combat plastic pollution as part of its broader waste management strategy.

The PM's aide called for collective efforts to transform vulnerabilities into strengths, urging stakeholders to seize this opportunity to rethink, re-collaborate and commit to sustainable progress for future generations.

Ms Alam said the Sustainable Development Conference would provide fruitful recommendations for the upcoming COP29 to be held in Baku.

SDPI Executive Director, **Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri**, said the world, and Pakistan in particular, stood at a crossroads. "As individuals and societies, we constantly face choices, yet today's challenges are especially crucial in shaping our future," he said.



Dr Suleri said: "In recent years, we've endured immense trials: the COVID-19 Pandemic halted global life, testing even the most advanced health systems. Then the Ukraine war disrupted energy supplies, raising costs and impacting economies worldwide, including Pakistan's." He said in the Middle East, conflict persists, with Gaza under attack and regional tensions rising, affecting oil and gas supplies.

He said climate change had brought devastating floods, heatwaves and smog, pushing the country to the edge.

"But we are not here to despair; we're here to celebrate resilience. Pakistanis rebuilt after the 2022 floods, our economy stabilised despite global crises, and our citizens turn to solar energy and

change were devastating the ecosystems beyond repair, with extreme weather events and slow-onset of disasters disrupting the lives of millions of people.

Citing the World Bank's report, she said 750 million people in South Asia had experienced natural disasters in the past two decades, with Pakistan's 2022 floods causing \$30 billion in losses.

Smog across the border was causing loss of lives and spreading diseases, especially in Lahore, **Ms Alam** lamented. She lauded the resolve of Punjab Chief Minister, Ms Maryam Nawaz, who was taking stringent actions against climate



social activism to improve their lives,” **Dr Suleri** said.

In his opening remarks, SDPI’s Board of Governors’ Chairperson, **Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel**, highlighted global issues, including political conflicts like those taking place in Ukraine and Palestine, climate crises, as well as rising poverty, which had impacted 1.1 billion people worldwide.



He emphasised the need for greenhouse gas reductions and noted Pakistan’s own environmental, poverty, and pollution challenges.

He highlighted that 40 percent of Pakistan’s population was living below the poverty line, adding that the rate of population growth itself had degenerated into the mother of all problems of Pakistan.

Despite this, **Mr Kakakhel** said, Pakistan had seen economic improvement through increased agricultural and industrial production.

The SDPI chairperson said the SDC would feature

discussions on topics such as emerging technologies, food systems, and women’s empowerment in tech.

He said that SDPI also launched a ‘Sustainability Investment Expo’, focusing on climate resilience and underscored SDPI’s commitment to sustainable development and its collaborations with government and international organisations.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Use moments of fragility as catalysts to foster resilience by rethinking, reconnecting, and relearning sustainable practices that protect future generations.
2. Shift focus not only toward fundraising for climate disasters but also position Pakistan as a pivotal partner in global climate finance.
3. Support institutions in generating research-driven solutions to the climate crisis, ensuring policy decisions are informed by data and evidence.
4. Build local government capacity by equipping them with the tools and knowledge to educate and empower their communities in sustainable practices.
5. Develop a comprehensive climate policy addressing poverty reduction, social equity, women’s empowerment, agriculture, and inclusivity, while ensuring these sectors are aligned with sustainable development.
6. Implement the 5E Framework (Economic Growth, Social Equity, Environmental Sustainability, Energy, and E-Governance) to guide short- and medium-term strategies for economic and social development.
7. Utilise AI to drive innovation, improve resource management, and promote responsible citizenship, positioning technology as a tool for sustainable adaptation.
8. Enhance governance structures to ensure accountability in implementing climate resilience policies and achieving sustainability targets.
9. Expand social protection initiatives to reach marginalised groups, providing equal education and economic opportunities, particularly for women.
10. Facilitate meaningful dialogue among stakeholders to foster collective action on gender equality and environmental sustainability, working toward a safe and resilient Pakistan.



Plenary 1.2:

Sustainability Investment Expo: Awards and Ribbon Cutting Pioneering Solutions for Climate Resilience

Moderator: Ms Saleha Qureshi, Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Presentation: SDPI's Sustainability Awards 2024: Statistics, Process and Evaluation Approach

Welcome Remarks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Sustainability Awards Categories:

1. Agri-Tech and Food Security
2. Circular Economy
3. Gender Equality
4. Production Innovation and Decarbonization
5. Renewable Energy
6. Social Impact and Community Engagement
7. Sustainability Education Innovator
8. Water Conservation

Remarks by Chief Guest: Senator Sherry Rehman, Chairperson/Convener, Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC), Government of Pakistan

Winners Group Photo with Jury Members and Chief Guest

Introduction of Expo: Ms Zainab Naeem, Associate Research Fellow, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Ribbon Cutting and Visit of Stalls by the Chief Guest

Plenary Organisers: Ms Romila Qamar, Ms Sahar Basharat, Ms Saleha Qureshi, Ms Sadia Satti & Ms Arooj Waheed Dar, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Mr Ibraheem Khan & Ms Ramlah Javed

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ymnk9gC-pPA>





5. Social Impact and Community Engagement: Kehkashan Usman from MG Apparel.
6. Renewable Energy: Naveed Ashraf, Head HSE & Sustainability from Fauji Cement
7. Circular Economy: Rafay Qazi, Head of Production and Sales, Concept Loop
8. Agritech and Food Security: Col. Salar Malik from Fauji Fertiliser Company Limited

Ms Rehman said bigger companies could scale up their operations, which raised their profile to win these awards. Therefore, she said she would like SDPI to focus on young tech entrepreneurs and have a separate category for them.

The Senator said, four youth in Balochistan had invented a fibre material that had the same density as common plastic but was also completely biodegradable. "Let's find them and bring them into the mainstream," she added.

Senator Rehman deplored lack of coverage by the mainstream media on climate emergency, stating that "Media is treating climate as a disaster tool". She said media only focuses on climate change when a disaster occurs, primarily holding print media responsible because "they know better".

Therefore, the SDPI should have a "journalist category" for the awards to reward those who focus on climate change as a priority, she added.

The Senate Committee Chairperson said, when our eyes get sore due to air pollution, motorways are closed and flights are cancelled, only then media highlights the issue.

She said the 2022 floods had affected one-third of the country and "we are still picking up the pieces". She said even those of us not directly affected should ask ourselves how we help the affected people in resuming their normal lives.

Ms Rehman said according to data, Pakistan was the fifth country on the list of countries vulnerable to climate change. "However, I think that we are at an even higher risk because our population is not trained to deal with climate emergency," she added.

On water, the Senator said Pakistanis had one of the highest per capita water usage which means we are wasting water which is a "finite, precious" resource which would not last forever.

She said we have examples of countries like South Africa where citizens had to ration water usage. "If we do not want to be like them, we should consume less," she warned the audience.

The Senator deplored that a large amount of unfiltered sewage was being dumped into Rawal Dam on a daily basis, which was the main source of water for Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

"Two of the provinces of the country were green when I

NARRATIVE REPORT

Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Chairperson **Senator Sherry Rehman** said pollution was a serial killer in Pakistan.

Speaking at the 'Pioneering Solutions for Climate Resilience', **Ms Rehman** said measures as small as tuning vehicle engines were needed to help control smog.

"We are saying that burning of crop residue in India is causing smog in Lahore, but we need to understand that we cannot build a wall, therefore we have to take measures to control pollution," she added.

She commended the SDPI for taking sustainability beyond a cliché and making it applicable. She also congratulated the winners of the Sustainability Awards.

The winners and their categories included:

1. Social Impact and Community Engagement category: Abid Rafiq, CEO HBL
2. Water Conservation Champions: Dr Mohammad Tufail, Pro Vice-Chancellor NED University of Engineering and Technology
3. Production, Innovation, and Decarbonisation: Toheed Ghani Mahesar from Artistic Milliners
4. Gender Equality: Nadir Gul Bareech, CEO Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund



was a little girl; now they are brown,” she added.

Ms Rehman said we were ingesting microplastics directly from food which was causing a higher rate of disease and immunity to medicines, adding that only one per cent out of the 30 million tonnes of solid waste worldwide was recycled.

In the end, **Senator Sherry Rehman** inaugurated the Second Sustainability Investment Expo 2024.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Focus on reducing emissions from local sources, especially in high-pollution areas like Punjab, where smog heavily impacts public health and school attendance.
2. Implement advanced combustion technologies in brick kilns and other machinery to decrease sulphur emissions and improve air quality.
3. Reduce plastic use by exploring and promoting biodegradable materials for water and beverage containers, mitigating the spread of microplastic pollution.
4. With only 1% of Pakistan’s solid waste recycled, adopt a circular economy approach to significantly reduce waste, enhance recycling, and improve waste management infrastructure.
5. Develop youth-led initiatives focused on water conservation, especially critical as glaciers in the northern regions rapidly melt.
6. Promote efficient water management for thirsty crops (e.g., wheat, sugarcane, rice) and explore water-efficient agricultural practices.
7. Include media as a central partner in climate change communications with a focus on proactive messaging to mitigate impacts of floods, heatwaves, and other climate-related events.
8. Introduce drought-resistant crop varieties to support agricultural resilience under changing climate conditions.
9. Involve private sector companies in resilience and sustainability projects to broaden the scope and impact of climate initiatives.



Plenary 1.3: (High-Level Plenary)

Legal Framework of Climate Finance

Moderator: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Scene Setting: Justice Jawad Hassan, Lahore High Court

Speakers:

1. Syed Bulent Sohail, Advocate High Court & Managing Partner, Sohail & Partners, LLP
2. Mr Khurram Lalani, Principal, Resources Future Limited
3. Prof. Dr Christian Tietje, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany (Online)
4. Professor Petra Minnerop, Professor of International Law, University of Durham, UK (Online)

Plenary Organisers: Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad & Engr. Ubaid ur Rehman Zia, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Mr Ali Rehmat, Ms Ramsha Mehboob Khan & Ms Amna Jamshaid

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmmnYWrwPAA>

NARRATIVE REPORT

In a high-level plenary titled “**Legal Framework of Climate Finance**”, **Justice Jawad Hassan** of the Lahore High Court said it was important to know what climate financing law was in Pakistan and what the legal framework Pakistan had offered. He said local and international donors had raised three questions during the last COP28.



The questions were whether there is any legal framework for financing law in Pakistan, how climate financing is protected in Pakistan, and whether there are any disputes regarding it and how the courts would

address them. He emphasized that Pakistan was the most deserving country for climate grants.

Justice Jawad Hassan emphasised the critical need for a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework to enhance climate finance initiatives in Pakistan, particularly, in response to the severe impacts of climate change the country faces. He highlighted the necessity of establishing clear mechanisms for climate adaptation and mitigation financing, especially as Pakistan engages with the Loss and Damage Fund, while also addressing challenges such as defining eligibility for vulnerable communities and ensuring equitable access to funds.

Mr Khurram Lalani said that while international climate finance is very important, it is crucial for Pakistan to introspect and identify areas where governance can be strengthened. He emphasised the need to rely on science when selecting solutions for investment. “I recommend that the government focus on land and soil use policy, coastal and marine policy, and a forest framework, as Pakistan lacks a National Forest Framework,” he said. He further emphasized that promoting electric vehicles, as done internationally, is a great initiative towards reducing smog, which Lahore has been suffering from. This goal can be achieved by



reducing the cost of electric vehicles through incentivising EV companies with subsidies, such as tax exemptions, discounts on land costs, and reduced import duties. These measures would also help lower the cost of batteries, which is a major factor contributing to the unaffordability of such vehicles for the general public.



Dr Christian Tietje said increased access to finance could build capacity and address soft limits to adaption and avert rising risks, especially for developing countries, vulnerable groups, regions, and sectors. Public finance is an important enabler for adaptation and mitigation and can also leverage private finance, **Dr Tietje** said.

Dr Petra Minnerop talked about Article 6 of Paris Agreement and said it took three years to negotiate the Paris Agreement rulebook, consisting of 20 decisions, and adopt several sets of guidance and rules of

- institutions.
2. Ensure climate finance agreements and clauses are clearly articulated to improve the allocation and monitoring of funds.
3. Introduce consistent and clear policies for electric and hybrid vehicles, including increased loan limits and policy incentives to encourage adoption.



modalities. She said the existing market mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol have resulted in verifiable emission reductions that would not have occurred without these instruments. Market approaches permit countries to identify and enable the most cost-effective options to meet mitigation challenges, she added.

Syed Bulent Sohail proposed several options including incentives from the State Bank of Pakistan and Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, tax incentives from the Federal Board of Revenue and inclusion of carbon credits in the export control list under the import and export control Act.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish environmental courts and provide specialised training for legal professionals, incorporating best practices from international

4. Develop and implement national carbon standards to monitor and reduce emissions across sectors.
5. Create a unified legal structure to support climate finance initiatives, incorporating insights from successful approaches in other jurisdictions.
6. Promote academic exchanges to foster knowledge sharing and innovation in climate finance and legal frameworks.
7. Strengthen the first Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and align with global stocktake processes to secure international climate funding.
8. Develop a robust legal framework for forest conservation, supporting ecosystem protection and sustainable forest management.
9. Encourage EV production by reducing taxes and offering physical incentives, moving away from indefinite subsidies to targeted support that fosters growth.

Plenary 1.4:

Economic Resilience amidst Turbulent Times

Master of Ceremony: Engr. Ahad Nazir, Associate Research Fellow & Head Center for Private Sector Engagement Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Moderator: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Scene Setting Presentation: Professor Dr Shantayanan Devarajan, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., USA (Online)

Distinguished Speakers:

1. Dr Samuel Rizk, Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme, Pakistan
2. Dr Dushni Weerakoon, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS), Sri Lanka
3. Mr Najy Benhassine, Country Director, The World Bank Pakistan
4. Ms Esther Perez Ruiz, Resident Representative, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Islamabad

Plenary Organisers: Engr. Ahad Nazir, Ms Maheen Rehan & Dr Khalid Waleed, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Maheen Rehan & Mr Tahir Zaman

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKfY1fCi544>



NARRATIVE REPORT

While speaking at a plenary titled '**Economic Resilience amidst Turbulent Times**', experts said the South Asian economies despite convincing growth trajectory were vulnerable to economic debacle due to their denial of economic crises emerging amid inaction towards intersectoral gaps.

The session was attended by speakers including heads of the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Sri Lanka.

Professor Dr Shantayanan Devarajan from Georgetown

University, Washington, D.C., USA, who participated virtually, juxtaposed economic and political turmoil in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh as a case study for the South Asian countries that had a perplexing situation amid spiking growth rate since their progress in the 1990s.

Dr Devarajan underlined that despite per capita income having doubled along with rapidly increasing secondary



education enrolment and child mortality rate plummeting, countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka faced widespread public protests against the democratically elected governments and ousted the popular leaders.

He added that the Sri Lankan crisis was primarily due to denial of economic crises brewing out of sitting government's short-run growth-focused decision and reluctance to restructure its debts with the IMF increased pressure on all sectors feeding into the economic outlook.

The protests, **Dr Devarajan** said, only focused on the administration and governance in those countries whereas Bangladesh was consistently a strong performer in terms of growth and manufacturing, poverty reduction, education and health. However, persistent high levels of corruption, bad governance and cost of denial in Bangladesh downgraded its growth rate, he added.

Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS), **Dr Dushni Weerakoon** said the political capital in Sri Lanka could not be ignored while dealing with its economic crises.



Even though the country was coming from an IMF programme that led to the increase in taxes, the then Sri Lankan Premier decided to lower the taxes to embrace increased economic outlook, she pointed out.

Dr Weerakoon said the political leadership of Sri Lanka lost its political capital in the 2022 polls after implementing the IMF recommendations in the programme. However, the economic revival in Sri Lanka was beyond expectations as the Government embraced above business-as-usual approach to address the crises.

Dr Najy Benhassine from the World Bank said that Pakistan was not a country in denial. "This is a country that keeps going through 'boom and bust' cycles. We already know the causes behind those cycles for Pakistan, but we cannot seem to get out of them," he said, adding, "The problem for me is that Pakistan keeps going back to the same thing."



"I have no hesitation to say that yes, the current government is on the right track. There are energy and fiscal reforms in place. But will the recovery stay in track once these reforms is the big question," he added.



International Monetary Fund (IMF) Resident Representative in Pakistan **Ms Esther Perez Ruiz** said over the last year, we have seen a remarkable return to macroeconomic stability.

Agreeing with Dr Benhassine, **Ms Ruiz** said the latest reforms are likely to push Pakistan away from 'boom and bust' cycles and put in place a macroeconomic model of sustainable growth.

She said the energy sector reforms aimed at making the energy sector sustainable by making energy more affordable, as well as collecting taxes from sectors that previously did not pay taxes, were the focus of the current EFF programme.

"One thing that will put the country on a sustainable path this time is the sense of ownership, which was missing in the 2013 and 2019 programmes," she added.

Dr Samuel Rizk, Resident Representative of the UNDP, said a country that had multidimensional challenges needed multidimensional solutions.

"Short termism in Pakistan leads to quick optimism and that becomes the problem that repeats the 'boom and bust' cycle," **Dr Rizk** said.

He said even when you talk about resilience, Pakistan needs to decide where to put its resilience.



“The 2022 floods caused \$30 billion losses. So, Pakistan needs to decide what sort of resilience is needed in the face of the next disaster. Where is the money going to come from? Funding, financing, investment or insurance,” Dr Rizk said.

He said: “Without disposable income in people’s pockets, you cannot pay for health, education and even insurance.”

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Countries like Sri Lanka and Pakistan should engage in systematic debt restructuring processes to ensure sustainable growth and prevent dependency on international financial institutions (e.g. IMF). A structured framework would mitigate economic volatility and allow for gradual, resilient economic recovery.
2. Address systemic corruption and governance challenges that hinder economic stability. Improving transparency and accountability in governance will build public trust and enhance economic efficiency, essential for attracting investments and securing international support.
3. Move from mere economic stabilisation efforts to strategies aimed at fostering long-term resilience. This involves setting and adhering to economic policies that promote sustainable, diversified growth, especially in the face of global and regional crises.
4. Streamline and strengthen tax policies to improve domestic revenue mobilisation. Effective tax reforms, including expanding tax bases and optimising collection, are critical to reducing dependency on foreign aid and loans.
5. Prioritise human capital development through investments in education, health, and skills training. A skilled, educated workforce will drive productivity and foster a competitive business environment, facilitating economic growth.
6. Implement policies to create a conducive business environment, encouraging entrepreneurship and foreign investment. Reducing bureaucratic hurdles and offering incentives for investment are necessary steps to bolster private sector engagement and economic growth.
7. Focus on long-term economic reforms rather than short-term fixes. This includes tackling structural issues such as inefficient tax systems, inadequate infrastructure, and restrictive labour markets. A comprehensive reform agenda should be designed with clear timelines and accountability measures.
8. Develop holistic approaches to tackle multidimensional poverty, considering factors such as education, health, and economic security. Programmes should be designed to address these interconnected aspects, moving beyond income-focused poverty alleviation strategies.
9. Collaborate regionally to address economic and geopolitical challenges that affect development. Collective efforts towards resilience and stability can reduce dependency on foreign aid and create a supportive environment for regional trade and cooperation.
10. Advocate for changes in global financial assistance criteria, focusing on transparency and accountability. Conditionality in loans should underscore anti-corruption measures, governance improvements, and socioeconomic reforms tailored to long-term sustainability.



Plenary 2.1:

Leveraging New Economic Geography for Shared Prosperity, Stability and Resilience

Master of Ceremony: Ms Khansa Naeem, Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Moderator: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Scene Setting: Mr Haroon Sharif, Chairman, Pakistan Regional Economic Forum (PREF), Islamabad, Pakistan

Distinguished Panellists:

1. Engr. Khurram Dastgir Khan, Former Federal Minister, Government of Pakistan
2. Ambassador Naghmana Hashmi, Former Ambassador of Pakistan to China
3. Dr Dushni Weerakoon, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS), Sri Lanka
4. Dr Paras Kharel, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal
5. Dr Rajan Sudesh Ratna, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: Sub-regional Office for South and South-West Asia (UNESCAP-SSWA), India
6. Dr Moeed Yusuf, Vice Chancellor, Beaconhouse National University (BNU), Lahore, Pakistan (Online)

Plenary Organisers: Mr Hassan Murtaza & Mr Asim Zahoor, SDPI

Rapporteur: Ms Aqsa Huma

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97wBfU42Yjg>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Speakers stressed the need to translate Pakistan's regional connectivity and infrastructure into economic incentives. They were participating in a plenary discussion on the topic 'Leveraging New Economic Geography for Shared Prosperity, Stability and Resilience' held on the second day of the Sustainable Development Conference (SDC).

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI initiated the plenary by stating that the plenary's focus was on identifying the political and geopolitical economic issues that could impact a nation's economic resilience, the difficulties and opportunities for sustainability,

stability and resilience as well as how the new economic geographies were being drawn. He further explained that the panellists would examine how Pakistan was being impacted by the US elections and the present Middle East escalation, particularly the energy crisis.

Pakistan Regional Economic Forum Chairperson, **Mr Haroon Sharif**, questioned the efficiency of the infrastructure that connected Pakistan with various countries, including China as well as South and Central Asian states. He said the motorways had been politically beneficial and served the elite who drive big cars, but if the same investments were made in Pakistan Railways, it might have gotten more economic gains as it would have promoted trade. He posed a question to the

panellists about how to use proximity for economic advantage, fearing that otherwise, it would end up like the pipeline projects in Pakistan.

Mr Sharif further said that instead of getting obsessed with connectivity, should we not be working on synergies with our trading partners because 'if you do not talk to your neighbours, despite having neighbours, you are landlocked'.

Vice Chancellor of Beacon House National University, Lahore, **Dr Moeed Yusuf** started on a grim note by saying that our conversation is being held in echo-chambers, which unfortunately is falling on deaf ears and nobody cares. He said the problem is that we continue to hold conversations on regional cooperation while the world was moving on. "Eventually we will be forced to pick sides on someone else's terms," Mr Yusuf lamented.



He said that he was part of the team that had formulated the National Security Policy but we had stopped acting on it even though the conversation was still around it. "If I ask all ministries concerned, what they think economic diplomacy is, will I get the same answer from them?" he wondered.

Internationally, wherever you go, the conversations have changed from friendly countries to bankable transactions, he said, adding, "Do we have a bankable transaction?"

Dr Moeed Yusuf said when it came to regional cooperation, Pakistan and its neighbours had a binary choice between the US and China. "The ability of a country to avoid this binary choice is directly proportional to its internal strength," he added.

Former ambassador to China, **Ms Naghmana Hashmi**, said having worked with China for over 20 years, she had found that China had moved on from what Mao Zedong had said that political power depends on military might. "But we are still stuck there," she added. **Ms Hashmi** said CPEC was never about power projects and connectivity alone, adding "We were supposed to develop our industrial zones based on the connectivity from CPEC."



She said China was complaining about security but was still sending its people. "So, it is up to us to improve our security situation," she added.

The former ambassador said when China introduced its climate policy, 17 ministries endorsed it because they were interconnected. A similar approach should be followed in Pakistan, she said.

Former Federal Minister, **Mr Khurram Dastgir Khan**, said Pakistan had always been leveraging its geographical location to determine our foreign policy. He said when it came to relations with neighbours, it was a matter of what do we prioritise and often we fall on the matter of security before economy.



With regard to trade with neighbours, especially India, **Mr Khan** said it is easier to take an emotional line instead of prioritising what was actually good for Pakistan. The right way to think requires "Opening our minds, our country and our conversations, no matter how difficult," he added. On smog, he wondered whether we still follow the emotive line or whether we engage in conversation with India because the issue of climate does not concern boundaries.

Dr Dushni Weerakoon, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies Sri Lanka spoke on regional cooperation. Ms Weerakoon said we have similar conversations about the "tyranny of location" in Sri Lanka. We know about these issues, but even in the foreign policy of Sri Lanka, we are not able to address it, she said.

Dr Paras Kharel from South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment, Nepal, spoke on the importance of SAARC in connection with regional cooperation. He said after the political changes in Bangladesh, discussion on SAARC came to the forefront, which was a good sign, and if Pakistan and India can sit together in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), they can also have a conversation in SAARC, especially when it is one of the best platforms to discuss climate, especially smog.



Dr Rajan Suresh Ratna from UNESCAP-SSWA, India, said it was not just about cooperation, it was also about peace and development, adding that SAARC region hosts half of the poor population of the world. He said



there was a disconnect between policymakers of these countries and the people living on the borders, adding that inside the country there are big roads and highways, but there are bottlenecks on the border that disrupt connectivity.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Think tanks, policymakers, and political commentators in Pakistan should prioritise understanding and responding to global transitions and heightened risks, as these shifts have wide-reaching implications for regional stability.
2. The government should develop policies and institutions aimed at attracting private capital to drive regional connectivity initiatives that extend beyond Pakistan's borders, fostering economic interdependence and shared growth.
3. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) should be revitalised to effectively address shared challenges, such as air pollution and smog, that impact multiple countries in the region, particularly India and Pakistan.
4. Pakistan and India should collaboratively tackle environmental challenges like smog, ensuring a cleaner and healthier future for citizens on both

Dr Ratna said when COVID hit, it took no time for the leaders of SAARC countries to come together and make a policy. "So, they have demonstrated the ability to come together; it's just that they do not share economic interest as a priority," Dr Ratna said.

He said the World Bank had an index that measured cost of trade which showed that it was cheaper for India to trade with the US and the European Union, as



compared to trading with Bangladesh or Pakistan.

The panellists concluded with recommendations, the chief among them being that Pakistan should open its borders for regional cooperation and think about deregulation of the private sector, and move towards country's interest rather than emotional rhetoric.

sides.

5. There is a need for greater collaboration between Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to advance the country's economic and strategic interests on the global stage, building economic resilience and promoting stability.



Thematic Session A-1: (Podium Discussion)

Women Leading Sustainable Development: Addressing SDGs and Beyond

Moderator: Dr Fareeha Armughan, SDPI

Distinguished Speakers:

1. Dr Nafisa Shah, Co-convener Parliamentary Forum on Energy and Economy, GoP
2. Ms Farzana Yaqoob, Former Minister, GoP
3. Ms Shaista Pervaiz, MNA, GoP
4. Dr Zeba Sathar, Country Director, Population Council, Islamabad

Panel Organisers: Ms Fatima Muzammil & Mr Yahya Gulraiz, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Mr Yahya Gulraiz & Ms Ramlah Javed

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEFCQDn2OhM>

NARRATIVE REPORT

Leading voices from Pakistan's political and social landscape gathered to discuss **the crucial contributions of women to policy reforms, social welfare, and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. The critical role of women in advancing sustainable development took centre stage during this thematic session.

Dr Fareeha Armughan, Research Fellow, SDPI, opened the session by underscoring the transformative impact of women leaders across various sectors such as education, governance, and economic development. She stressed that women are vital in overcoming systemic barriers, reshaping power dynamics, and fostering collaboration for sustainable solutions.

"Our panel today showcases women who have overcome traditional limitations, actively supporting sustainable development and reshaping power dynamics in society," **Dr Armughan** noted.



Dr Nafisa Shah, Member of National Assembly (MNA) from Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), spoke about the legacy of women leaders, starting with a tribute to the late former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who was a pioneer of social development in Pakistan. **Dr Shah** highlighted the work of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus in advancing gender rights, such as the 2010 Anti-Sexual Harassment Law and the establishment of a Human Rights Commission. "When women leaders unite across party lines, they prioritize social welfare, championing the rights of the people they represent," **Dr Shah** affirmed, urging continued cross-party collaboration to address gender inequality and meet Pakistan's SDGs' commitments.



Ms Shaista Pervaiz, MNA of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), emphasized the importance of women's inclusion in decision-making processes for the nation's sustainable progress. Drawing from Margaret Thatcher's quote, she remarked

that women leaders bring action-oriented perspectives to policy-making. Reflecting on the achievements of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, particularly in advancing laws for women with disabilities and transgender rights. **Ms Pervaiz** called for more direct parliamentary seats for women and greater involvement of women at all levels of governance. "Our progress may be gradual, but it is real," she stated, stressing that inclusive governance is essential for effective sustainable development.



high unmet need for family planning services. "We need a group of dedicated leaders to prioritize human development and set an example for sustainable progress," Dr Sathar said. Citing successful case studies from countries like Nepal and Malawi, she encouraged Pakistani leaders to adopt similar commitments to achieving Sustainable Development Goals.



Ms Farzana Yaqoob, Former Minister from Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), commended SDPI for keeping sustainable development at the forefront of national policy debates. She highlighted AJK's strong literacy rates and how they contribute to women's empowerment and accountability. **Ms Yaqoob** also called for increased support for women in entrepreneurship and technology sectors. "We need more women entrepreneurs breaking into diverse fields beyond traditional sectors," she stated, stressing the importance of targeted support to help women overcome barriers to accessing capital and advancing climate resilience.

Dr Zeba Sathar, Country Director of the Population Council, concluded the session with a stark call to action, urging Pakistan to accelerate its efforts toward achieving the SDGs by the 2030 deadline. She expressed concern over Pakistan's rapid population growth, which places increasing strain on resources, and the

The session provided invaluable insights into the integral role of women in driving sustainable development, emphasizing the need for continued investment in women's leadership, social progress, and legislative advocacy to achieve lasting change. The discussions reinforced the collective responsibility to integrate women's contributions into national strategies for sustainable development.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In Pakistan, patriarchy deeply permeates society, often necessitating male endorsement for women's representation. Shifting this paradigm is essential to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fostering genuine progress:

1. Women's issues should be integrated as mainstream societal goals rather than being perceived as 'soft' or secondary agendas. Women's progress is



- fundamental to societal advancement and should be prioritized across all policy sectors.
2. Reinforce policies to prevent child marriage and address the high birth rate. Effective regulation and community engagement are needed to delay early marriages, improving health and economic outcomes.
 3. Allocate direct seats in the Parliament and ensure women's representation in decision-making bodies. Without substantial female representation, democratic processes lack inclusivity and fail to reflect societal needs.
 4. If women, who constitute nearly half of the population, are underrepresented or restricted from participation, election outcomes should be reassessed for legitimacy.
 5. Ensure women have a presence where significant decisions are made, recognising that countries progress when women are empowered to lead and contribute.
 6. While many women work in sectors like clothing, jewellery, and crafts, there is a pressing need to provide access to diverse business opportunities, including exports and entrepreneurship in emerging industries.
 7. Engage women in nutrition-focused roles, enabling them to contribute to public health recommendations and promote healthier consumption patterns across communities.
 8. Offer training and mentorship in non-traditional fields to diversify women's skills, supporting them in acquiring capabilities beyond conventional roles.



Thematic Session A-2: (Roundtable)

Debt, Debt Justice and Development

Moderator: Dr Sajid Amin Javed, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Opening Remarks: Mr Abdullah Dayo, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Pakistan

Chair: Rana Ihsaan Afzal, Coordinator to Prime Minister on Implementation and Monitoring, GoP

Speakers:

1. Mr Mohsin Mushtaq Chandna, DG (Debt), Finance Division, GoP
2. Dr Dushni Weerakoon, IPS, Sri Lanka
3. Dr Paras Kharel, SAWTEE, Nepal
4. Dr Hamza Ali Malik, Director MPFD, UNESCAP, Thailand
5. Dr Farooq Sattar, MNA, MQM
6. Ms Ammara Durrani, UNDP
7. Mr Ali Salman, ED, PRIME Institute
8. Mr Mosharraf Zaidi, ED, Tabadlab
9. Mr Khurram Hussain, Journalist, Karachi
10. Mr Mehtab Haider, Senior Journalist, The News
11. Mr Imtiaz Ali Solangi, FBR, GoP

Panel Organisers: Dr Sajid Amin Javed & Ms Aqsa Naveed, SDPI | Mr Abdullah Dayo, FES

Rapporteurs: Ms Aqsa Naveed & Dr Tayyaba Masood

NARRATIVE REPORT

Coordinator to Prime Minister on Implementation and Monitoring **Rana Ihsaan Afzal** said the current government was undertaking serious fiscal regime reforms to ensure completion of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) 25th programme as the last lending facility opted by the country. He was addressing the roundtable titled 'Debt, Debt Justice and Development' on the second day of the 27th Sustainable Development Conference.

Rana Ihsaan Afzal said the Government under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's leadership had set an ambitious target to complete this IMF programme that would help the country envisage sustainable economic growth. The PM's aide termed the country's consumption-based economy as a precursor to its increasing external borrowing. However, due to the already tightening revenue guards in place, the Government had closed the window of another spike in taxes for the next budget, he added.

The Government, **Mr Afzal** said, had focused on tax evaders particularly in the high-income sectors with

an internal target of tax collection to be met this year by the federal government intended to boost internal revenue collection.

Member of National Assembly (MNA) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-Pakistan) leader **Dr Farooq Sattar** commended that the session was informative and knowledgeable providing quality recommendations on debt restructuring and its solutions. He pointed out that a state of denial among the Government, political parties and the opposition was not allowing policymakers to initiate curative measures for economic revival as the country's economy was living on symptomatic solutions.

Dr Sattar said: "A national agenda is the need of the hour for all political parties to chalk out a solution unanimously as the policymakers will have to find a solution through inclusive and sustainable approach."

Deputy Executive Director, SDPI, **Dr Sajid Amin Javed**, while moderating the roundtable, set the scene for the participants. He said debt discussions were limited to staggering numbers and statistics, adding that the



governments did not pay taxes but rather the masses were bearing the brunt of increased taxes and revenue collection decision. Since the debt and development shared an intertwined relationship critically linked to poverty and SDGs, the discourse should be held on unexplored facets of this correlation, Dr Sajid said.

In his opening remarks, **Mr Abdullah Dayo** from FES said the theme of the discussion was crucially important as growing debts of the country were burdening and stressing the financial space.

Mr Mohsin Mushtaq Chandna, DG (Debt), Finance Division, said the year 2022 was bad for developing economies



like Pakistan as inflation was rising and climate disasters had further aggravated their economic stress. He suggested

that increase in revenue collection with inclusion of new sectors eligible to pay tax would help create a favourable space along with increased exports and a sustainable primary surplus to provide growing opportunities for the economy of Pakistan.

Dr Dushni Weerakoon, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Sri Lanka explained that her country had initiated debt restructuring, with a hot debate for debt write-off against restructuring which was clearly refused by bilateral creditors. In Sri Lanka, people protested that the government should not exercise debt restructuring at the cost of the people, she added.



Dr Paras Kharel from SAWTEE, Nepal, said his country had accumulated debt at an alarming rate, with the debt to GDP ratio surging from 21 to 42 per cent in the past decade. He suggested that a cap on public debt to GDP ratio and external debt might not work as it could not support the political electoral spending in Nepal that created a vicious cycle that never ends.

Dr Hamza Ali Malik, Director MPFD, UNESCAP, said the economic and fiscal mismanagement were the main reasons for Pakistan's poor debt management whereas liquidity versus solvency issue in the country needed further probe to devise clear strategy post debt

consumption.

Executive Director, PRIME Institute, **Mr Ali Salman** said that debt restructuring and debt justice statistics alone could be misleading as under such a matrix, it had to be economically and politically sustainable. Social unrest is a challenge as increase in debt retirement intensity involves social repercussions, he added.

Ms Ammara Durrani from the UNDP said current global



financial architecture had been repeatedly discussed by the UN and declared dysfunctional for countries like Pakistan. "We need to learn on climate justice from countries that led to the loss and damage fund by the group of vulnerable countries. Pakistan has an opportunity to undertake diplomacy on multi-country debt justice," she said.

Executive Director, Tabadlab, **Mr Mosharraf Zaidi** said Pakistan was insolvent financially but globally commercial banks were providing large amounts of debt to it. However, it was necessary to have a distinction between internal and external debts as the latter involves geopolitics, climate change,





and internal policy rate, he said.

Mr Imtiaz Ali Solangi from the FBR said the country needed to initiate planning for debt restructuring as it involved negotiations with stakeholders, stocktake scenarios, and multiple negotiations with lenders.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Pakistan's policymakers are grappling with a difficult trilemma: rising spending needs, an escalating debt burden, and shrinking fiscal space for government expenditures. To tackle this, thought leaders should:

1. Strengthen the role of parliament in fiscal decision-making to promote accountability and responsible governance, ensuring that economic policies reflect national priorities and long-term stability.
2. Encourage a unified, strategic approach to economic reform, involving all relevant sectors and stakeholders to achieve sustainable development.
3. Increase the tax base by bringing more sectors into the tax net. This will improve revenue generation and reduce reliance on external borrowing.
4. Focus on export-driven growth as a sustainable path forward, focusing on diversification in key

sectors such as IT, healthcare, and legal services to increase Pakistan's global competitiveness.

5. Ensure budget discipline by maintaining a primary surplus, reducing the need for additional debt, and fostering fiscal resilience.
6. Prioritise investments within Pakistan to stimulate growth. Focus on generating resources domestically and expanding export capabilities to reduce dependency on foreign funding.
7. Apply insights from climate justice frameworks to develop equitable debt management strategies that prioritise social and economic fairness.
8. Establish a clear and robust Debt Management Architecture, incorporating innovative tools to enhance debt sustainability and transparency.
9. Focus on allocating borrowed funds toward projects that yield economic returns and promote sustainable growth.
10. In cases of Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation (FRDL) Act violations, the Parliament should hold relevant officials accountable.
11. Invest in capacity-building programmes for parliamentarians and their staff, equipping them with the skills to make informed decisions on fiscal and debt-related issues.



Thematic Session A-3: (High-Level Policy Dialogue & Podium Discussion)

Driving Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Development Under CPEC 2.0: Opportunities for Sustainable Industrial Growth

Moderator: Engr. Ubaid ur Rehman Zia, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Welcome Remarks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad

Opening Remarks: Mr Mustafa Hyder Sayed, ED, PCI

Technical Presentation: Dr Hassan Daud Butt, Senior Advisor, Energy China

Keynote Speech: Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, Chairman, PCI

Distinguished Speakers:

1. Mr Wang Huihui, Chairman, CCCI
2. Mr Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, AIERD
3. Dr Erfa Iqbal, Additional Secretary / EDG, BoI, GoP

Panel Organisers: Dr Khalid Waleed, Engr. Ubaid ur Rehman Zia & Ms Saira Adnan, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Mr Fahad Nadeem & Ms Ayesha Naeem

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hurlr4A2sXM>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBTYM8ME-OUM>

NARRATIVE REPORT

Representatives of Chinese businesses called on the Pakistani government to prioritise one-window operations, ensure continuation of supportive policies, and enhance security for investors to foster industrialisation and business growth in the country. They were speaking at a high-level policy dialogue titled 'Driving Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Development Under CPEC 2.0: Opportunities for Sustainable Industrial Growth'.



Mr Wang Huihui, Chairman of the China Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Pakistan (CCCI), suggested that Pakistan must provide a secure environment for the Chinese private sector to invest in the country. He also emphasised that Pakistan could benefit from learning about China's Green Special Economic Zones (SEZs) model

for sustainable economic growth. The Green SEZs focus on eco-friendly development, renewable energy, and sustainable practices to create jobs and promote long-

term industrial growth, **Mr Wang Huihui** said.

The CCCI Chairman said Pakistan must create a secure investment environment to encourage Chinese private-sector participation. He specifically pointed to the importance of learning from China's Green SEZ model, which emphasised eco-friendly development and sustainable practices, including the use of renewable energy. According to **Mr Wang**, these zones not only contribute to long-term industrial growth but also play a critical role in poverty alleviation and job creation.

"SEZs have the potential to boost Pakistan's industrial sector, reduce poverty, and foster trade liberalization," he said, noting that CPEC's infrastructure development could be a game-changer for the country's economy.

Senator Mushahid Hussain, Chairman of Pakistan-China Institute, underscored China's pivotal role in global



economic growth, noting that 30 per cent of worldwide growth came from China. He praised China's dual focus on connectivity and green development, highlighting the country's

leadership in technological fields such as AI, robotics, and 5G. He also pointed to China's regional expansion, including its \$400 billion partnership with Iran and the construction of the Wakhan Corridor, which will link not only Pakistan but other Central Asian states. He stressed the need for Pakistan to take decisive steps to benefit from China's global rise, particularly through CPEC and other infrastructure initiatives.



Executive Director of the Pakistan China Institute (PCI) **Mustafa Hyder Sayed** also echoed calls for an autonomous body to oversee SEZ development in Pakistan. He argued that bureaucratic

instability, with frequent changes in ministers and officials, hinders progress in the SEZ sector.

Senior Adviser to Energy China, **Dr Hassan Daud Butt**, stressed the importance of localisation for the success of SEZs. He pointed to the growing interest from Chinese companies in industries such as packaging and energy, but warned that the government must implement a clear roadmap to address existing challenges. "China has a long-term vision for CPEC, but we must ensure real ease of doing business for investors," he said.

Additional Secretary and Executive Director at Pakistan's Board of Investment (BoI), **Dr Erfa Iqbal**, said



China was shifting from labour-intensive industries and that the focus of SEZs under CPEC should now be on private sector engagement. She emphasised that while Pakistan faces challenges, the SEZs were not in a dire situation, and there was room for growth in Phase II of CPEC. She also mentioned ongoing roadshows in Chinese cities aimed

at attracting investment in seven export-oriented sectors in Pakistan, including textiles, leather, and fishing, which would continue until December 2024. Addressing concerns from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over incentives for SEZs, she clarified that the IMF had recommended phasing out, not eliminating, these incentives.

Mr Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, CEO of the Asian Institute of Eco-civilization, Research, and Development (AIERD), called for a more efficient and streamlined



approach to managing CPEC investments. He criticised the overlapping roles of institutions such as the Special Investment Facilitation Center (SIFC) and BoI, arguing that multiple agencies handling the same responsibilities lead to inefficiency and confusion.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Pakistan is in the early stages of developing SEZs under CPEC 2.0, while China has nearly four decades of experience with SEZs. Drawing on China's success, Pakistan can maximise the potential of its SEZs by implementing the following recommendations:

1. Create a fully independent Special Economic Zones Authority staffed by SEZ experts, supported by legislative empowerment and fixed tenures to ensure continuity and expertise in zone management.
2. Prioritise the establishment of technologically advanced and secure SEZs to strengthen investor confidence and enhance operational efficiency, thereby making Pakistan's SEZs globally competitive.
3. Formulate policies within SEZs aimed at generating job opportunities, especially for Pakistan's young and growing workforce, to meet demographic and economic needs.
4. Implement measures to simplify investor processes, enhance security, and create an investor-friendly environment that attracts both foreign and domestic investment.
5. Strategically balance International Monetary Fund (IMF) policy requirements with SEZ development needs, ensuring that economic reforms support SEZ expansion without undermining growth potential.
6. Ensure policy stability through political cycles to foster a predictable investment environment and build long-term investor trust in SEZs as a national priority.
7. Enhance institutional support for SEZs and proactively address any misconceptions about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to foster local and international support for SEZ initiatives.
8. Smoothly transition to CPEC 2.0 by sustaining investor interest and promoting joint ventures

in green technology and sustainable industrial practices.

9. Provide competitively priced land within SEZs and focus on high-potential sectors to attract industries that can drive economic growth and create employment.
10. Emphasise integration of advanced technology and green practices within SEZs to promote sustainable

environmental sustainability.

14. Appoint skilled and experienced leaders to oversee SEZs, ensuring effective governance and strategic decision-making aligned with national objectives.
15. Facilitate free movement of capital within SEZs to create a more favourable investment environment and attract diverse funding sources.
16. Strengthen relationships with current investors



development and align with global environmental standards.

11. Reduce bureaucratic layers and provide SEZ organisations with greater autonomy to improve efficiency and responsiveness to investor needs.
12. Study successful SEZ models worldwide to implement best practices that boost competitiveness, productivity, and environmental responsibility.
13. Focus on environmentally sustainable projects and enhance production capabilities within SEZs to support long-term economic resilience and

while attracting new ones, focusing on consistent support and infrastructure improvements within SEZs.

17. Develop a comprehensive strategy for SEZ development, keeping in mind consistency, infrastructure expansion, and investor confidence as pillars of sustainable growth.
18. Prioritise development of existing SEZs, integrating eco-friendly practices to attract environmentally conscious investors and promote sustainable industrial growth.



Thematic Session A-4:

Role of Textile Industry in Strengthening Climate Action in Pakistan

Moderator: Ms Zainab Naeem, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Chair: Mr Muhammad Farooq, Sr. Joint Secretary (CC & Environment), GoP

Keynote Speaker: Mohammad Nisar Palla, COO, Yunus Textile Mills

Panellists:

1. Mr Ahmad Qazi, European Union Delegation to Pakistan

2. Mr Asad Naqvi, UNEP, Geneva

Closing Remarks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, SDPI

Panel Organisers: Ms Zainab Naeem & Ms Amna Urooj, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Mr Ali Zawar & Mr Aftab Hameed Mirani

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbZMzqWLFYg>

NARRATIVE REPORT

Speakers on Tuesday said promotion of renewable energy was necessary to reduce industrial production and curb carbon emissions. They were speaking at a session titled 'Role of Textile Industry in Strengthening Climate Action in Pakistan' on the second day of the Sustainable Development Conference.

Chief Operating Officer, Yunus Textiles, **Mr Mohammad Nisar Palla** said they were producing 40 per cent electricity on a self-help basis for their own use through four wind-turbines and solar panels. He said the textile industry was playing an important role in the country's economy and therefore it should be facilitated. K-Electric has signed two MOUs with private solar firms – one of 240 megawatts and the other 150 megawatts, he said, adding that no capacity charges were involved and green efficient cheap electricity was being produced. He said they had been working on seven different sources of green energy for the last seven years. **Mr Palla** said if the industry was allowed to install solar power, it would reduce production costs as well as carbon emissions.



Mr Asad Naqvi from UNEP-Geneva said if Pakistan wanted to compete internationally, it would have to reduce its per unit cost of electricity and use recyclable material. He said the textile industry globally would grow to 3.3 trillion dollars by 2030. "Cost of production will determine how competitive you are in the global markets, and that would apply to the textile market as well," Mr Naqvi



said. He further said there was a need to work on trade and labour policies.

Mr Ahmed Qazi from the European Union (EU) Delegation to Pakistan said if we get into a discussion on who was producing more pollution, we would not be able to come up with a solution. Therefore, we need to work on ways to reduce pollution, he added. **Mr Qazi** said any product brought into the European Union would undergo checks, any industry that failed to comply with protocols allowed the EU. He said EU was not only helping Pakistan in curbing carbon emissions, but also other countries affected by it, adding that climate change was not restricted to Pakistan alone. He said at present, no province in Pakistan had been spared by climate change.



Senior Joint Secretary, Climate Change Ministry, **Mr Mohammad Farooq** said we needed investment for decarbonization, therefore public-private partnership was required, whether in textile, transport, or agriculture. He said all sectors, including textile, should play a role in containing carbon and bring down 43 per cent carbon emission in the coming years. He also stressed working on policy and regulatory mechanisms for green energy, adding that work on climate change is not only being undertaken by the ministry concerned but also the



finance and other relevant ministries. He said as compared to developed countries, Pakistan's carbon contribution per capita was less, but the country was still facing its effects.

In his closing remarks, SDPI Executive Director, **Dr Abid Suleri**, said that industries should work themselves to limit climate change effects and not wait for the government to take measures. In this way, the industries' production would be cost effective, but also reduce pollution, he said. **Dr Suleri** said the SDPI was giving its input on industrial policy and would play a role in research and policy.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As climate change accelerates and international buyers enforce stricter compliance requirements, promoting sustainability within Pakistan's textile sector has become crucial. The government and private sector must work together to:

1. Establish a comprehensive green ecosystem that promotes sustainable practices across the textile industry, integrating environmental consciousness at every level.
2. Improve environmental standards within the textile industry to reduce pollution and enhance eco-friendly practices in alignment with global expectations.
3. Develop a robust framework to support and encourage green entrepreneurship, fostering innovation and sustainability within the textile sector.
4. The Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC) should collaborate with the textile and agriculture sectors to advance decarbonisation efforts, reducing carbon footprints and promoting climate resilience.
5. Prioritise investments in technology transformation to enhance energy efficiency, reduce waste, and drive sustainable production practices in the textile industry.
6. Strengthen connections between the public and private sectors, supporting the PPP model and EcoGreen initiatives to create an environmentally sustainable textile industry.
7. Foster inter-ministerial collaboration to align with

the Green Growth (GG) mission, ensuring consistent efforts towards sustainable practices in the textile sector.

8. Implement strategies to reduce energy consumption in textile production, lowering costs and decreasing environmental impact.
9. Encourage alignment and collective action between private companies and the government to enhance industry-wide climate action.
10. Build a circular economy in textile production to reduce waste, improve resource efficiency, and extend the lifecycle of products.
11. Ensure that trade and export policies are in harmony, supporting the growth of sustainable exports that meet international environmental standards.
12. Consider fiscal, labour, and energy policies within industrial planning to create a supportive environment for sustainable textile production.
13. The government should embed skill development initiatives in labour policies to equip workers with the skills needed for sustainable textile practices and new technologies.
14. Strengthen PPP initiatives to boost investments in sustainable technologies and practices within the textile sector.
15. Develop policies inspired by the EU Green Deal, supporting affected regions, promoting sustainable trade, and educating consumers on eco-friendly product choices.
16. Increase consumer awareness of sustainable products, empowering them to make environmentally conscious purchasing decisions.



Thematic Session A-5: (Policy Dialogue)

Fragility to Resilience through Citizen-Led Accountability

Moderator: Ms Uzma Nomani, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), Islamabad

Chair: Mr Mohammad Tahseen, Board Chairperson, PPAF, Islamabad

Presentation: Mr Nadir Gul Barech, CEO, PPAF, Islamabad

Speakers:

1. Dr Shahid Naeem, Consultant, MoPASS, GoP
2. Mr Masood ul Mulk (TI), CEO, SRSP
3. Ms Mome Saleem, UNICEF

Panel Organisers: Mr Ahmed Khaver, SDPI | Ms Uzma Nomani, PPAF

Rapporteurs: Mr Tahir Zaman & Mr Nazar Muhammad

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVwuEac83RQ>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Speakers stressed the need for implementing poverty alleviation programmes at the community level to achieve sustainable growth while speaking at a policy dialogue on 'Fragility to resilience through Citizen Led Accountability' on the second day of the Sustainable Development Conference.

Ms Uzma Nomani from PPAF opened the session by highlighting Pakistan's challenges, including political unrest, economic instability, rising insurgency, and the severe impacts of climate change. These issues, she noted, strain the government's ability to meet the needs of a growing population, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities. She added that the joint session, hosted by SDPI and PPAF,

would focus on fostering citizen-led accountability and resilience through digital advocacy as a tool for change.



CEO of Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) **Mr Nadir Gul Barech** said we were at a critical juncture in Pakistan's journey towards resilience and sustainable development. He said PPAF believed that by holding elected representatives accountable, citizens could be architects of their own future. When citizens engage in planning, monitoring, and evaluating the actions of their leaders, it fosters a sense of trust in the political system," he stressed. Mr Barech further said it was essential for proper functioning of democracy.



"We always encourage citizens to demand accountability of their leaders. There is a need to bridge the gap between the state and citizens and for that national level education was required," he added.

"A system-based approach needs to be adopted. Community's development is the solution and can also be the policy," he said, adding that when communities identify their needs, they implement their development

projects.”

CEO Sarhad Rural Programme, **Mr Masood ul Mulk** said community development was very important, as it had



two equations: one is organisation and the second is building accountability. All poverty alleviation funds and rural support programmes were attempts to create a responsible organisation that would be able to respond to community needs, he said.

Ms Mome Saleem from UNICEF noted that environmental issues were rarely discussed until social media amplified the conversation. She stressed the importance of engaging local communities on social, economic, and other critical issues through diverse platforms.

Drawing on 15 years of experience in community empowerment, Ms Mome Saleem emphasised three key actions. First, she stressed the importance of giving people a voice and platforms to raise issues. Citing her own initiative, she said, “I started a WhatsApp group called ‘Reclaiming Green Islamabad’ to address environmental concerns. While residents were aware of the problems, they lacked a forum to voice them.” Second, she highlighted the need for capacity building through knowledge sharing and management. She underscored the importance of including local communities in empowerment efforts, recognising their wisdom and advocating for their involvement in policymaking and monitoring processes. Finally, Ms Saleem stressed the necessity of accountability. Communities, as beneficiaries, have the right to hold authorities accountable. To enable this, she called for establishing clear pathways for reporting and resolving issues.



Chairman Board of Directors, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), **Mr Mohammad Tehseen**, said resilience was the right of every citizen of the state, and the Constitution also provided this right.

Panellist **Mr Shahid Naeem** said trust deficit between the government and citizens was a two-way traffic. “People do not want to pay taxes while the government keeps all policies confidential,” he said,



adding that every legislation remains as top secret until it is approved.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Pakistan’s fragility stems from governance challenges, socioeconomic disparities, and inadequate representation of marginalised groups. Building resilience requires empowering citizens, fostering trust between government and civil society, and promoting active participation across all societal actors. Think tanks and other stakeholders can play a crucial role in creating frameworks that empower citizens and promote collaborative problem-solving in the following domains:

1. Citizen Empowerment and Awareness

- Launch accessible programmes to educate citizens on their rights and responsibilities within governance processes, with a focus on empowering marginalised communities.
- Develop a lifelong Citizens’ Information Portal to inform citizens of government actions, policies, and updates at local and national levels, fostering transparency and engagement.

2. Community-Driven Development

- Promote community-driven projects where citizens, particularly from tribal and underserved areas, identify and prioritise local issues.
- Create policies that consider the cultural and economic specificities of tribal and remote regions to maximise effective resource utilisation.

3. Institutionalising Citizen-Led Accountability

- Establish a Citizen Monitoring Framework or System, allowing communities to hold leaders accountable for policy outcomes and public service delivery.
- Implement regular, transparent public reports on government progress, financials, and impact assessments to reinforce trust and accountability.

4. Strengthening Local Governance

- Reform local government structures to increase grassroots representation and decision-making power, ensuring alignment with community needs.
- Create collaborative planning and monitoring frameworks where local councils and citizens work together on development initiatives.

5. Inclusion of Marginalised Groups.

- Implement policies to ensure representation of marginalised groups in decision-making bodies, utilising quotas, leadership programmes, and targeted outreach.
- Offer training programmes to empower youth, women, and tribal populations, enhancing their capacity to engage in governance processes.

6. Collaborative Decision-Making Framework

- Form a Multi-Stakeholder Council comprising representatives from government, civil society, and citizen groups to collaboratively identify and resolve critical issues, with a mandate for public reporting.

- Conduct regular public consultations at various governance levels to capture diverse viewpoints on socioeconomic and political matters.

7. Accountability and Transparency Measures

- Conduct external audits of government programmes and publicly funded projects to ensure transparency and accountability.
- Establish an independent 'Citizen Accountability Bureau' (CAB) to address complaints, monitor government performance, and enforce transparency in governmental actions.

8. Institutional Capacity Building

- Integrate civic education in schools and communities to promote values of accountability and social responsibility, drawing inspiration from models like those in Australia.
- Strengthen the capabilities of government agencies and community organisations to manage and oversee development initiatives effectively.

9. Promoting Trade Unions and Social Actors in Decision-Making

- Enable trade unions and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to participate actively in decision-making, identifying grassroots challenges and recommending viable solutions.
- Establish formal mechanisms for social actors to contribute to national policy discussions, especially those aimed at enhancing resilience and reducing fragility.

10. Policy Development and Evaluation

- Develop policies that address specific regional challenges, with regular evaluations to assess impact, gather feedback, and refine strategies.
- Encourage collaboration between academia, business, and civil society to develop innovative resilience-building solutions.



11. Additional Recommendations

- Recognise the interconnections between social, economic, and environmental systems in resilience-building efforts.
- Implement reforms to improve service delivery and efficiency within bureaucratic and local government systems.
- Leverage technology to communicate with, engage, and mobilise citizens, enhancing resilience through digital inclusivity.
- Create a sustainable societal framework that values self-reliance, inclusivity, and accountability.
- Promote a culture of accountability among policymakers, civil society leaders, and citizens to strengthen governance.
- Shift towards a governance model that prioritises citizens' well-being, participation, and trust.
- Drive social change by shifting cultural norms toward inclusivity, equity, and shared responsibility.



Thematic Session A-6:

Socio-Climate Compliance for Resilience of Labour and Industry

Moderator: Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Chair: Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri, Chairperson / Convener, Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights, GoP

Presentations:

- Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad, SDPI - Socially and Environmentally Compliance Brick Kiln Framework
- Ms Rabia Razzaque, ILO -Global Report: Heat at Work: Implications for Safety and Health: A Global Review of the Science, Policy, and Practice

Speakers:

1. Mr Federico Santos Azcarate, Labour Issues Expert, Washington, D.C., USA
2. Mr Iqbal Ahmed Detho, SHRC, Karachi
3. Mr Ikram Rasheed, Senior Advisor, Construction Industry

Closing Remarks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, SDPI

Panel Organisers: Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad, Mr Muhammad Awais Umar, Ms Ramsha Mehboob Khan, Mr Ali Rehmat & Mr Irfan Ahmad Chatha, SDPI | Ms Rabia Razzaque, ILO

Rapporteurs: Mr Ibraheem Khan & Ms Ramsha Mehboob Khan

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyEmEZg8O7o>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Senate Committee on Human Rights Chairperson, **Ms Samina Mumtaz Zehri**, announced plans to create a comprehensive policy framework aimed at addressing human rights issues, particularly those impacting labourers. The committee will collaborate with various stakeholders to formulate this framework, which will be presented to both the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of the province.

Senator Zehri also called on the management of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) to share insights from the Sustainable Development

Conference (SDC) to elevate these critical issues on national agenda, stressing the importance of addressing human rights, climate change, and other urgent issues, stating that while the problems are well-known, it was now time to focus on finding solutions.



In the panel discussion titled **'Socio-Climate Compliance for Resilience of Labour and Industry'**, the Senator said she had been actively advocating for workers' rights in Balochistan, a region rich in natural resources.

However, many workers in Balochistan's mines are unaware of their rights, leading to various health issues and challenges related to climate change. She highlighted that labourers lack proper training and equipment, and many were not registered.

Despite the presence of 800 coal mines in Balochistan, only 500 labourers are officially registered, and many of them work multiple jobs, she said, adding that the conditions for labourers were inadequate, with no access to ambulances or educational facilities.

The Senator recounted a conversation with officials from the Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), who mentioned that workers received their benefits only after 50 years. When she inquired whether the workers were informed about this, the officials indicated that they only communicate with the workers' supervisors. She expressed her dismay at this situation, noting that the minimum wage was not being provided to labourers in the region.

In commending the efforts of SDPI for organising the SDC moot, she emphasised that this event presented a valuable opportunity to address critical issues related to human rights and climate change. She stated that the discussions would be compiled and presented to the Prime Minister for consideration in the national agenda.



In her presentation, **Ms Rabia Razzaque** from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) discussed the 'Global Report on Heat at Work: Implications for Safety and Health', which highlighted that each year, 2.41 billion workers worldwide were affected by heat waves, various diseases, and the impacts of climate change.

Dr Shafqat Munir from the SDPI proposed an innovative approach through the Socially and Environmentally Compliant Brick-Kiln Framework (SECBKF). He recommended that brick-kiln owners provided land for cultivation to labourers instead of offering advance payments, thereby promoting green initiatives. Given that the brick kiln sector in Pakistan was not regulated, there



were currently no laws in place to ensure worker safety and security. "As a result, only vigilant committees are active in this area. To address these challenges, I have suggested an incentive-based compliance system for brick kiln workers," he said.



Mr Federico Santos Azcarate highlighted the tragic case of Rosa Maria, one of six workers who lost their lives during Hurricane Helene in the U.S., a consequence of authorities prioritising business interests over

worker safety. "Did they deserve to die?" he asked, echoing the questions raised by lawsuits, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, and the victims' families.

He highlighted the growing impact of climate change, particularly Asia's intensifying heatwaves. Citing research by the Solidarity Centre and Dr Lori Parsons of Royal Holloway University, London, he noted that heat stress in Cambodia reduced informal vendors' incomes by 27% and garment workers' productivity by 30%.

He highlighted the benefits of labour unions, noting that unionised U.S. workers received 74% less working time during extreme heat compared to 37% for non-union workers. He stressed that freedom of association and collective bargaining are key to ensuring safer work environments amid rising heat stress.

Mr Iqbal Ahmed Detho, Chairperson of the Sindh Human Rights Commission, stressed on the need to address the intersection of climate change and social responsibility through sustainable and resilient approaches, which impact industries and labour markets. He highlighted Pakistan's commitment to implementing ILO conventions on key issues such as minimum age limits, the abolition of child and bonded labour, non-discrimination in employment, and safe working conditions. He also noted the government's amendment to Article 9A of the Constitution, expanding the fundamental right to a clean and healthy



environment, particularly benefiting brick kiln workers.



Senior Adviser in the construction industry, **Mr Ikram Rasheed**, stated that Pakistan produced 60 billion bricks annually, supported by 18,000 brick kilns. While there has been considerable discussion regarding the rights of workers in this sector, practical measures have yet to be implemented. He emphasised the necessity for systemic change, advocating for the replacement of traditional bricks with blocks in infrastructure and construction projects. He suggested providing small loans to workers to enable them to cultivate vegetables and fruits, thereby contributing to a reduction in carbon emissions. **Mr Rasheed** also highlighted the importance of adopting refabricated building structures and noted that Bangladesh's focus on microfinance banking could play a significant role in diminishing bonded labour.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As climate change exacerbates occupational hazards, particularly in regions like Pakistan, addressing the socio-environmental impacts on labour and industry is crucial. Building resilience requires robust policies and targeted interventions to protect workers and ensure sustainable practices in high-risk sectors like mines and brick kilns. Academia, development stakeholders and think tanks should focus on the following areas:

1. Data Collection and Policy Formulation
 - Prioritise data collection on heat exposure impacts, especially in underserved regions, to inform targeted policies and interventions.
 - Strengthen Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) regulations to safeguard workers from climate-induced hazards such as extreme heat. This includes guidelines for safe working conditions and emergency responses.
2. Worker and Employer Education

- Educate workers and employers on the risks of heat stress and the importance of protective measures, including hydration, ventilation, and heat breaks.
 - Tailor safety standards to address the unique needs of different sectors, such as factories, brick kilns, and mining, to ensure effective and relevant protections.
 - Implement systems for mine worker registration, skill development programmes, and alternative livelihoods to reduce reliance on precarious mining jobs.
3. Investment in Workplace Infrastructure
 - Invest in improved ventilation and cooling systems in workplaces, especially in sectors prone to high heat exposure, to minimise health risks.
 - Develop emergency response strategies to protect workers during extreme weather events, ensuring rapid and coordinated action.
 - Address the health and safety challenges faced by mine workers in resource-rich but high-risk areas.
 4. Economic Benefits of Worker Safety
 - Emphasise the economic advantages of investing in worker safety and health as a means to enhance productivity, reduce turnover, and support sustainable growth.
 - Align trade, export, fiscal, and energy policies to reinforce sustainable and safe production practices in line with international standards, such as those of the International Labour Organization (ILO).
 - Encourage a 2.7% increase in the cost of bricks to cover social protection for kiln workers, funded by both public and private sectors.
 5. Promoting Collaborative Approaches and Capacity Building
 - Strengthen Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to implement OSH policies effectively, with active collaboration between government agencies, social sectors, and industry players.
 - Empower trade unions to play a significant role in negotiating workplace safety measures, especially for heat stress and flexible working hours.
 6. Synchronisation between National and International Compliance Standards
 - Ensure coherence between national labour policies and provincial regulations, promoting uniform standards for OSH across all levels of governance.
 - Implement independent audits and create a Citizen Accountability Bureau (CAB) to monitor and enforce OSH compliance, ensuring transparency and justice in labour practices.
 7. Climate Resilience in High-Risk Sectors
 - Brick Kiln Industry: a) Transition from traditional brick-making to more sustainable methods, such as using blocks that replace multiple bricks, to reduce emissions. b) Support brick kiln workers through microfinancing options, social protection funds, and worker training on health and safety. c) Implement zigzag kiln technology

to reduce emissions in the brick-making industry. d) Cultivate green areas around kilns to mitigate environmental impacts. e) Provide brick kiln labourers with training on their rights and compliance standards and ensure proper social security contributions by employers. f) Introduce a comprehensive rescue and rehabilitation plan for workers affected by climate hazards, with adequate social fund allocations from the



government. g) Initiate microfinancing options for brick kiln workers' families to support green projects and reduce reliance on traditional brick production.

- Mining Industry in Balochistan: a) Protect mine workers by establishing a national committee to oversee labour conditions, enforce health and safety protocols, and promote alternative livelihood programs. b) Ensure Afghan refugees and other vulnerable workers are registered to access social protection.
8. Institutional Capacity Building and Skill Development
- Equip workers with new skills to adapt to a transitioning economy, focusing on green industries and sustainable practices.
 - Integrate public health initiatives targeting

labourers in high-risk industries to prevent climate-related illnesses and promote long-term well-being.

- Recognise and support businesses that actively reduce emissions and adopt sustainable practices, fostering a community of shared best practices.
9. Developing Climate-Resilient and OSH-Compliant Policies
- Mainstream OSH into climate policies, continuously evaluating legislation to align with emerging climate risks.
 - Develop tailored frameworks for each sector, particularly for brick kilns and mines, with support from organisations like the Sustainable Development Policy Institute.



Thematic Session A-7:

Women in Trade – A South Asian Perspective

Moderator: Ms Sadia Satti, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Chair: Ms Gulmina Bilal Ahmad, Chairperson, NAVTTC

Opening Remarks: Ms Birgit Lamm, Country Head, FNF Pakistan

Guest of Honour: Dr Najma Afzal Khan, Former MPA, GoP

Presentation: Ms Mahnoor Arshad, SDPI

Speakers:

1. Ms Anjum Assad Amin, Former Chairperson, NTC, MoCom, GoP
2. Mr Aftab Haider, CEO, PSW
3. Ms Nausheen Barkat, CEO Asqurr; Co-Convener FPCCI Central CSR Standing Committee on Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Karachi

Panel Organisers: Ms Sadia Satti & Ms Mahnoor Arshad, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Farwa Gohar & Ms Ramlah Javed

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2L0EjilUqXc>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Entrepreneurs and public office holders came together to discuss the impediments to women entrepreneurship and how to resolve them during the panel discussion titled 'Women in trade – A South Asian Perspective'. Experts highlighted multiple challenges and areas of improvement to increase women entrepreneurship.

Ms Birgit Lamm from the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) opened the discussion and shared how her foundation was helping formulate the framework needed for any business



to grow, especially women-led businesses.

"Wherever in the world a new business is established, it comes with unique challenges, starting with raising capital. Our goal is to create a level playing field for men, women, and even young entrepreneurs," Ms Lamm said, adding, "Women in trade is not just a female issue; it's a societal one."

Ms Mahnoor Arshad, Research Associate at SDPI, presented a study conducted by SDPI on Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh on women empowerment. The study revealed that even though South Asia had seen rise in women holding public offices, investment in education and health of women remained stagnant.

Both these metrics can directly impact women empowerment and gender equality, which in turn leads to higher women entrepreneurship, the study showed. Ms Arshad said the study also proved that failure to remove the barriers to women entrepreneurship

was causing economic losses for Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. She shared that 76% of Pakistani women in the survey said that they did not know what internet was, compared to 39% in Sri Lanka and 69% in Bangladesh.



CEO of Asqurr and co-convenor of FPCCI's committee on entrepreneurship, **Ms Nausheen Barkat**, shed light on the ways in which women entrepreneurs could benefit from associations like FPCCI. She said there were mechanisms in place with such federations, such as subsidised registration

rates, as well as platforms to engage with other businesswomen, that could aide in improving access and market reach.

She also said microfinance banking systems played an important role in providing finance at subsidised rates, but if this facility was to be made accessible to the rural women, extra effort was needed to engage and educate them on these opportunities.

CEO of Pakistan Single Window (PSW), **Mr Aftab Haider**, said the problems were well documented. Several of the challenges of doing business are untraditional, such as cross border trade. Women who are new to business face problems but many women who have been



in business for a long time also face the same problems, he added. "Even if we have access to internet, do we know how to use it for entrepreneurship?," he questioned. He further added: "While most of us use it for entertainment, not many people know how to leverage it for business."

Former chairperson of National Technology Council (NTC), **Ms Anjum Assad Amin**, shed

light towards the discrepancy between mainstream statistics and the realities at hand, especially the divide between the urban and rural women. "How many of these public facilitation centres are in rural areas and how many of the rural girls are allowed to visit the urban areas to avail these facilities," she asked.



Ms Najma Afzal, former member of the provincial assembly, said if the sectors where women were already predominant were focused on, it could largely help women-led businesses.



Chairperson of National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), **Ms Gulmina Bilal Ahmad**, concluded the session by saying that the public, private and development sectors should not be saying that they were "supporting" women. "The public sector should be making sure that they have the same facilities and a level playing field," she added.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Women entrepreneurs, despite their significant contributions in sectors such as textiles, agriculture,

- IT, and handicrafts, face considerable obstacles. Limited access to funding, logistical challenges, and low literacy rates, prevent many from reaching high-demand markets. Addressing these barriers is essential to empower women and expand their economic impact.
2. To promote equitable growth and development, it is essential to ensure women have equal access to opportunities in trade and business, regardless of the products or processes involved.
 3. To foster a more equitable trade environment and empower women entrepreneurs, it is essential for CEOs and business leaders to actively engage in initiatives that promote women's participation in trade.
 4. Implement inclusive policymaking that ensures the dissemination of comprehensive data about women in trade, making it readily accessible to investors.
 5. Foster awareness initiatives aimed at overcoming barriers and building trust to encourage collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors.
 6. Advocate for inclusive policymaking that specifically addresses women's needs in trade and ensure their voices are represented in business decision-making.
 7. Organise capacity-building programmes for women-owned businesses and provide training that includes the involvement of male members of society to promote gender inclusivity.
 8. Enhance the online visibility of women-led businesses, making it easier for them to secure investments.
 9. Empower women through financial literacy programmes and improve their access to financial resources.
 10. Encourage diversification initiatives to capitalise on trade agreements in ways that specifically benefit women entrepreneurs.
 11. Invest in programmes that empower women through improved access to finances to facilitate greater participation in trade, especially in rural areas.
 12. Creating dedicated forums for women can significantly improve their access to information, resources, and networks, thereby empowering them in their business activities.
 13. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives from large businesses in Pakistan can partner with women's small enterprises for mutual benefit.
 14. Conduct gender audits within organisation to identify and address the specific challenges faced by women, particularly those from disadvantaged regions, in what is traditionally a male-dominated business environment.
 15. Improve access to essential information for traders, especially women, regarding how to navigate bureaucratic processes and understand compliance requirements.
 16. Provide training on digital tools to enhance business-to-business connectivity, ensuring that women are equipped with the necessary skills to leverage these technologies effectively.
 17. Promote and support 'women-centric' products in local markets through official branding and marketing initiatives that highlight and enhance the visibility of women-led enterprises.
 18. Implement training programmes to equip women with modern logistics skills, enabling them to efficiently prepare and transport products for both national and international markets.



Thematic Session A-8:

Global Plastics Negotiations and its Local Implications: Pakistan's Readiness

Moderator: Ms Zainab Naeem, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Speakers:

1. Mr Sheikh Waqar Ahmad, CEO, CoRe Alliance
2. Ms Jodie Roussell, The Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty, Nestlé (Online)
3. Ms Bontu Yousuf, WEF, Geneva (Online)
4. Dr Basit Yameen, LUMS, Lahore
5. Mr Faraz Ahmed Toor, LII, UN Resident Coordinator's Office
6. Mr Babar Aziz Bhatti, Green Earth Recycling

Panel Organisers: Ms Zainab Naeem, SDPI | Ms Namwar Yusuf, CoRe Alliance

Rapporteur: Ms Faria Farooq

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUIBTPhMMUI>

NARRATIVE REPORT

Experts called for establishing a cohesive national regulatory framework for plastic management, addressing inconsistencies between provinces and aligning with global treaty standards. They were speaking at a session titled 'Global Plastics Negotiations and its Local Implications: Pakistan's Readiness' held on the second day of the Sustainable Development Conference.

The experts also called for creating collaborations between academic institutions and industries to ensure research aligns with practical needs, fostering innovation in sustainable materials and recycling technologies. They suggested launching nationwide campaigns to raise consumer awareness of waste segregation and recycling.

In her opening remarks, **Ms Zainab Naeem** from SDPI introduced the session by setting the global and local context of plastic pollution crisis. She highlighted the United Nations' recent resolution to draft a legally binding global plastic pollution treaty and the importance of Pakistan's proactive participation in these negotiations.

CEO CoRe Alliance **Sheikh Waqar Ahmad** elaborated on the role of CoRe Alliance as a coalition bringing together major stakeholders from the plastic, packaging and recycling sectors in Pakistan. The Alliance's mission is



to align the perspectives of these diverse stakeholders to foster an environment that encourages sustainable plastic waste management, he said, emphasising the need for collaboration among government bodies, private corporations, recyclers and local communities. By building partnerships across sectors, Pakistan can create a unified approach to plastic waste management and advocate for legislation that reflects global best practices, Mr Ahmed said.

Ms Jodie Roussell representing the Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty, Nestlé, explained that the Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty advocated for a legally-binding instrument that reduced plastic waste and promoted a circular economy. This coalition includes companies like Nestlé, which were committed to achieving ambitious sustainability targets, she said.

Ms Roussell described the complexity of aligning the interests of 192 countries, each with unique economic



circumstances and waste management systems. She advocated for policies that incentivize companies to adopt recyclable materials, reduce plastic production, and contribute to a circular economy. These actions should be supported by international funding and technical assistance for developing nations, Ms Roussel said, proposing that the Treaty encourages innovation in material science, where new packaging materials could reduce environmental impact without compromising functionality.

Ms Bontu Yousuf from WEF, Geneva, Switzerland explained how Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP) supported developing countries in their journey toward sustainable plastic management. GPAP aims to create financing mechanisms that help countries like Pakistan develop robust waste management systems that align with international standards, she said.

Ms Yousuf discussed GPAP's role in helping countries bridge gaps in financing, capacity building and infrastructure to meet the expectations of the global Treaty. She stressed the importance of creating regulatory frameworks in Pakistan that encourage investments in waste collection, recycling, and sustainable production practices.

Dr Basit Yameen from LUMS, Lahore, identified a significant gap between academic research and industry requirements, noting that current research often fails to address the practical challenges faced by the plastics and recycling industries in Pakistan. He emphasised that while research on plastic waste management was ongoing, it was rarely translated into actionable solutions that industries could implement. He highlighted the need for accurate, comprehensive data on Pakistan's plastic consumption, waste generation and recycling rates. This data, he said, was essential for making

informed policy decisions and for industries to track their environmental impact.

He proposed creating formal partnerships between academic institutions and industry to ensure research was problem-oriented and actionable. For example, collaboration could focus on developing locally adaptable recycling technologies or alternative materials, Dr Yameen added.



Mr Faraz Ahmed Toor from the UN Resident Coordinator's Office described the United Nations' ongoing efforts to help Pakistan implement a comprehensive plastic waste management strategy, particularly through the Living Indus Initiative. Mr

Toor emphasised the need for an integrated waste management approach, where collection, segregation and recycling were addressed systematically. He mentioned that the UN was working closely with

Pakistan to develop frameworks that could support an effective plastic waste management system, aligning with the objectives of the forthcoming global Treaty. He proposed that Pakistan's government develop policy frameworks that clearly delineate the roles of private and public sectors in waste management, ensuring accountability and efficiency.



Mr Babar Aziz Bhatti from Green Earth Recycling pointed out key challenges faced by the recycling sector, including inconsistent waste collection practices, poor-quality recyclable materials and limited infrastructure. He emphasised the need for a structured, consistent approach to waste collection and

recycling across Pakistan, as the informal nature of the recycling sector makes it difficult to implement high standards. Despite challenges, he highlighted Pakistan's potential to improve its recycling rates, especially with the integration of informal recyclers into the formal economy.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Leverage effective policies from international models on plastic management, recycling, and circular economy principles. Instead of creating entirely new frameworks, start with gradual, practical steps to adapt proven strategies that align with Pakistan's context, ensuring they are tailored and feasible for local application.
2. Harmonisation across government and public

sectors is essential, with aligned incentives and opportunities for recycling.

3. Recognise the scale and specifics of the plastic problem; support local industries, innovators, recyclers, and recommendations from academia.
4. Engage actively in the global plastics treaty negotiations, focusing on collective, international commitments toward sustainable production. This treaty should not replicate policies that already address fossil fuels and chemicals but rather promote cohesive global standards that reduce plastic waste and enhance recycling, creating a unified approach across countries.
5. Integrate circular economy principles, understanding that no single entity (government, private sector, or others) can tackle this challenge alone – collaborative effort is essential.
6. Identify and differentiate between primary and secondary plastics; ensure proper usage of available machinery for sustainable adaptation.
7. The private sector must take on greater responsibility in waste management and sustainability efforts.
8. Develop national frameworks with key interventions, including tracking systems to identify specific types of plastic-related problems.
9. Determine the areas of highest value and societal benefit to prioritise government interventions.
10. Establish appropriate methods for collecting recyclable materials and improve overall waste management practices, with government support for private sector involvement.
11. Data collection should focus on providing actionable insights, not just broad numbers; understanding the technical nature of plastic waste issues is crucial.
12. Prior to policy development, thoroughly understand the problem's nature and ensure technical comprehension, with incentives focused on realistic solutions.



Thematic Session A-9:

The Life and Work of Mr Karamat Ali

Dedicated to (Late) Mr Karamat Ali, Champion of the Cause of Labour

Moderator: Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Documentary on the Life of Mr Karamat Ali

Opening Remarks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Distinguished Panellists:

1. Mr Mohammad Tahseen, Executive Director, South Asia Partnership Pakistan
2. Ms Mahnaz Rehman, Former Resident Director, Aurat Foundation, Karachi (Online)
3. Ms Farhat Parveen, Executive Director, NOW Communities, Karachi (Online)
4. Dr Navsharan Singh, Former Senior Program Specialist, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), India (Online)
5. Dr Saba Khattak, Former Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan (Online)
6. Mr Jatin Desai, Journalist, Mumbai, India

Panel Organiser: Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Mr Ali Rehmat & Mr Ibraheem Khan

Video Link: <https://www.facebook.com/sdpilearningdevelopment/videos/1471375486876297/>



NARRATIVE REPORT

A thematic session was arranged to celebrate **the life and work of labour activist Mr Karamat Ali** who was also the founding member of Pakistan Institute of Labour Education & Research (PILER). The session was moderated by **Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad**, Deputy Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

Speakers spoke at length about the services of late

Mr Karamat Ali, saying that the labour activist had left everlasting imprints on their hearts due to his commanding expertise on human rights. They said the late labour leader was an embodiment of freedom of thought, justice and labour movements. He was also a rights activist, sociologist, visionary and a revolutionary torch-bearer of the labour class.

Mr Mohammad Tahseen said Mr Karamat Ali was a revolutionary and a Marxist and a known labour rights activist, but at the same time worked for internal and

regional peace. He thanked SDPI for dedicating a session on Mr Karamat Ali's work and life.

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri narrated Mr Karamat Ali's story where the late activist served the people by distributing them food and medicines. He was always ready to help the needy. He recalled Mr Karamat Ali being an active part of SDPI's annual conferences. His work needs to be celebrated and remembered, stated **Dr Suleri**, adding, we should look at him as a role model.

Dr Navsharan Singh said Mr Karamat Ali was a dedicated advocate for labour rights, sociologist and peace activist as it stemmed from his belief for a better world. Mr Karamat Ali's death was a big loss for labour movements not only in Pakistan but all over the region. She recalled the tragedy of Bhopal where over 20,000 of people were killed because of release of a deadly gas from a factory and Bhopal gas victims continued to suffer. All this was in our minds when Baldia factory incident happened killing 259 workers, she

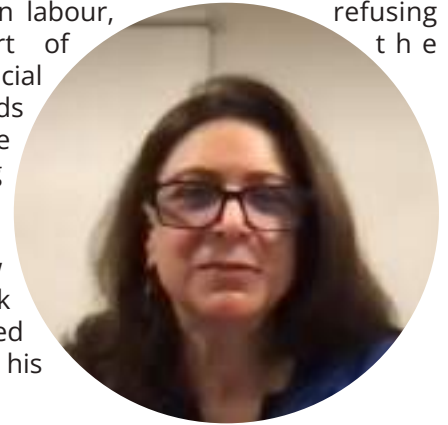


recalled adding, he led a struggle to hold the state and corporations responsible which was an unprecedented way of fighting an industrial accident - which was big legacy for all of us in the region. The fight was not just for compensation but for accountability and long-term responsibility and punishment for the guilty, she stated.

Mr Jatin Desai, journalist from India, sharing his memories of Mr Karamat Ali said he was a role model for everyone. "I met Karamat bhai and B. M. Kutty in Karachi, which I consider my second home. Both Karamat bhai and Kutty bhai deserve the credit of bringing Mumbai and Karachi Press Clubs together when delegates visited each other many years back. Journalists can play a significant role in strengthening relations between both the countries", he added. He further acknowledged the role played by Mr Karamat Ali along with Senator Iqbal Haider and Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid in the release of 454 Indian fishermen in August 2011. He said such events or memorial lectures should be held every year in continuation of the legacy of such people who worked for peace and social equality.

Dr Saba Khattak said Mr Karamat Ali always fought for justice, peace, women and labour rights. He advocated for peace and harmony in the region. He remained

optimistic to the very end, she added. He dedicated the office premises of PILER to the labour movement and conferences on labour, refusing to rent out part of building for financial relief, even as funds became scarce. He also took strong stances in support of feminists — an aspect that few discuss. Dr Khattak emphasised the need to carry forward his mission and legacy.



Ms Farhat Parveen, Executive Director, NOW Communities, shared that her mother loved Mr Karamat Ali the most amongst her siblings. His personality resonated

with the moral principles taught to them to uphold regardless of the circumstances. Being his niece, "I learned from him how to fight against poverty and inequality in Pakistan and found him supportive and encouraging especially to women, when I got



the chance to work with him in 1998 at the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education & Research," she added. Ms Farhat Parveen said he struggled to alleviate poverty and end inequality. She thanked the Indian friends for acknowledging his contributions for the peace and harmony in the region. "We need to carry his mission for labour rights, specifically the women labourers in Pakistan," she said.

Ms Mahnaz Rehman said Mr Karamat Ali was not only a labour rights activist but also a pro-democrat, who rendered matchless services for the society. She talked



about the activist's romance for revolution, saying he never missed a protest for labour rights and that he was a feminist inside.

He would always appreciate his mother at different platforms as a home-based worker who got him educated and empowered, she recalled.

Plenary 2.2:

Developing Resilient Food Systems: Climate Change, Regenerative Agriculture and Digital Innovation

Moderator: Dr Kashif Majeed Salik, Research Fellow, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Chief Guest: Ms Aisha Humera Chaudhry, Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC), Government of Pakistan

Keynote Speaker: Dr Adil Najam, Professor and Dean Emeritus, Boston University, USA

Presentation: Mr Zafar Masud, President and CEO, The Bank of Punjab (Online) –

Case Study: Chief Minister Punjab Kissan Card

Speakers:

1. Dr Fuad Imran Khan, Chief Commercial Officer, Concave AGRI
2. Mr Kazim Saeed, Chief Executive Officer, Pakistan Agricultural Coalition (PAC), Karachi, Pakistan
3. Mr Mustapha Yousaf, Chief Executive Officer, Blume Agri & Dar-Es-Salaam Farms
4. Mr Waqar Ahamad, Head of Corporate Affairs & Sustainability, Nestlé Pakistan

Plenary Organisers: Dr Kashif Majeed Salik & Mr Mobeen Ali Khan, SDPI | Ms Aatekah Mir Khan & Ms Namwar Yusuf Rahman, Nestlé Pakistan

Rapporteurs: Ms Ramlah Javed

Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_wrwP9f88KE



NARRATIVE REPORT

At the plenary on 'Developing Resilient Food Systems: Climate Change, Regenerative Agriculture and Digital Innovation,' international and local experts highlighted the severe impacts of climate change on agriculture. They emphasised that empowering farmers and enhancing human adaptability to environmental degradation are essential for achieving genuine resilience, moving beyond the buzzwords of digitalisation and AI-driven agricultural revolutions.

Dr Kashif Majeed Salik, Research Fellow, SDPI while setting the agenda informed the speakers that the plenary was intended to stocktake climate change

impacts on agriculture sector and gauge food security crisis in the country.

Dr Adil Najam, Professor and Dean Emeritus, Boston University in his keynote address said the agriculture transformation and its digitalization were serious issues that demanded thorough attention of the quarters concerned. He



pointed out that globally popular concepts such as agricultural digitisation, the AI revolution, and climate finance were often misleadingly presented as the sole solutions for achieving climate resilience. Instead, he emphasized the need for a clear distinction between genuinely effective measures and those that are merely promoted at the international level. He described resilience as the foundation, rather than the entirety, of a system designed to withstand severe disasters and environmental degradation. He argued that robustness, rather than just resilience, should be the ultimate goal in strategic planning.

Climate change is not merely a risk but an opportunity to advance inclusive and sustainable solutions for the challenges in the agriculture sector. It is vital to respect and empower farmers, who often possess deeper knowledge than many literate individuals about the local impacts of climate change, **Dr Adil Najam** said.

Dr Fuad Imran Khan, Chief Commercial Officer, Concave AGRI said his organisation was working on bio fertilizers and coated fertilizers whereas the sulphur coated urea helped gain 100% yield in rice crop during tests and trials. He termed that cooperatives have a significant role in scaling up usage and access to modern agricultural technology.



Mr Mustapha Yousaf highlighted that globally, cutting-edge technology is being used to detect crop diseases, implement preventive strategies, and provide farmers with proactive weather forecasts. He added that climate adaptation was a slow process but once the farmers were convinced with credible data then they would expedite it proactively.



Mr Kazim Saeed, Chief Executive Officer, Pakistan Agricultural Coalition (PAC), Karachi said regenerative farming had emerged almost two decades back as an alternate to pesticide-based crop cultivation. He advocated that economic incentives could bring the desired change of

bringing farmers closer to climate smart and adaptive agriculture practices.

Mr Waqar Ahmad, Head of Corporate Affairs & Sustainability at Nestlé Pakistan, stated that his organisation was investing globally in research institutions to support proactive and innovative agricultural research. This initiative, aimed at addressing the pressing challenges of climate change, is supporting approximately 4,000 research institutions and numerous scientists worldwide.



Mr Zafar Masud, President and CEO, The Bank of Punjab said the country's climate vulnerability, unpredictable rain and water cycles, financial and digital exclusion, and soil degradation were taking a heavy toll on agriculture sector's productivity. He pointed out that Kissan Card which is a complete digital solution of extending finance to small farmers had helped in inducting 74.9% first time women farmers, among them 75.3% owned land five-acre or below. The initiative, he said had helped in initiating the empowerment of the farmers' community as 17% new farmers were added to the industry through this facility.

In her concluding remarks, **Ms Aisha Humera Chaudhry**, Secretary of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, highlighted that

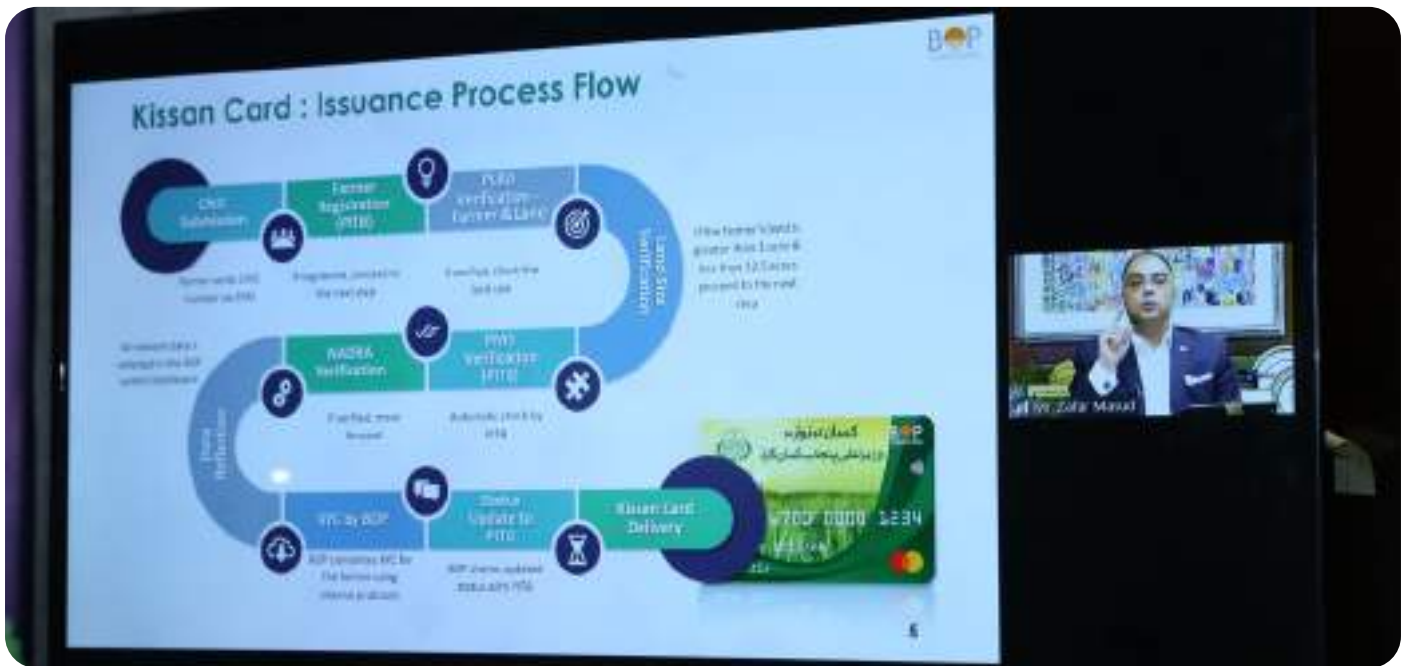


sector with greater government intervention, such as wheat production, tended to have lower productivity, whereas areas with stronger private sector involvement showed more positive results. She emphasised viewing climate

change as an opportunity and urged stakeholders to explore its entrepreneurial potential. She further stressed the importance of incentives in the agriculture sector to foster public-private partnerships and enhance resilience against climate change.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Through impactful analogies, the following recommendations stressed the importance of resilience, mindful resource use, and the value of farmer knowledge and experience in developing sustainable food systems in Pakistan:



1. Emphasise the mindful and efficient use of water resources, minimising waste and contamination. True resilience lies in sustainable resource management.
2. Highlight the importance of making informed choices, particularly in climate finance, to ensure funds are allocated toward sustainable practices.
3. Recognise that farmers possess valuable practical knowledge and are capable of making optimal crop decisions. Support should focus on empowering farmers rather than dictating methods.
4. Promote the use of bio-fertilizers and coated fertilizers to improve nutrient efficiency, increase nitrogen circulation in soil, and reduce chemical runoff.
5. Ensure up-to-date data through periodic agricultural censuses to guide policy and identify emerging trends.
6. Facilitate access to credit for local farmers, enabling them to invest in sustainable practices and innovations.
7. Expand crop insurance programmes to protect farmers against losses, encouraging them to adopt new methods and experiment with diverse crops.
8. Improve traceability systems for crops, particularly those meant for export, to strengthen Pakistan's position in global trade while stabilising prices for local consumers.
9. Develop and implement policies aimed at reducing post-harvest losses, ensuring that farmers and the wider economy benefit from improved food security and reduced waste.
10. Encourage partnerships like Nestlé's work in cultivating apples in Gilgit-Baltistan and mangoes and guavas in Punjab to increase crop diversity and quality.
11. Expand investment in research centres focused on cross-learning and innovation to enhance sustainable practices and crop resilience.
12. Ensure implementation strategies involve local communities, leveraging their knowledge and fostering a collaborative approach to sustainable agriculture.



Plenary 2.3:

Developing a Resilient Economy: Fostering Digital Innovations in Agriculture, Textiles and Beyond

Master of Ceremony: Mr Irfan Ahmad Chatha, Associate Research Fellow, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Moderator & Opening Remarks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Chief Guest: Ms Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Minister of State for Information Technology & Telecommunications (MoITT), Government of Pakistan

Keynote Speaker: Mr Mohamed Yahya, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, Pakistan

Guest of Honour: Dr Ishrat Husain, Former Federal Minister & Governor State Bank of Pakistan

Distinguished Speakers:

1. Dr Jordanka Tomkova, Senior Digital Transformation and M&E Advisor, Innovabridge Foundation, Switzerland (Online)
2. Dr Jing Huang, Economic Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), India
3. Mr Tanveer Karamat, Chief Executive Officer, Octopus Digital, Lahore (Online)

Plenary Organisers: Mr Irfan Ahmad Chatha & Ms Soha Nisar, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Soha Nisar & Mr Tahir Zaman

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYfOVL0QkU>



NARRATIVE REPORT

In the plenary titled 'Developing a Resilient Economy: Fostering Digital Innovations in Agriculture, Textiles, and Beyond', the discussion began with the issue of Pakistan being at a critical economic crossroads as the country grapples with an ongoing financial crisis and rising debt.

Dr Abid Suleri, Executive Director of SDPI, stated that the idea of Pakistan needing a financial cushion had been raised multiple times in past sessions. He questioned whether, given the already soaring debt, alternative solutions could be explored to help Pakistan achieve its

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He also shared the perspective that the international financial system had largely failed to support vulnerable countries like Pakistan.

UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan, **Mr Mohamed Yahya** gave a presentation titled 'Let Pakistan Breathe', in which he responded to the points raised by Dr Suleri. He stated that Pakistan's current fiscal situation is dire, with annual financing needs for achieving the SDGs standing at \$54 billion, while over half of the national budget is consumed by debt servicing.



the mandate of managing 12 federal and provincial departments. He noted that during this period, tax collection and public satisfaction rates were much higher.

Discussing the role of technology in Pakistan's future economic development, **Dr Hussain** warned that technology should be seen as a tool to improve lives, not an end in itself. "Technology can be both beneficial and disastrous, depending on how it's channelled," he added.

Dr Jing Huang, Economic Affairs Officer at the United Nations Economic and Social

Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in India, shared examples of how technology has improved lives but also created challenges, particularly for farmers who struggled to adapt their processes to automation quickly enough.

He highlighted that only 6% of Pakistan's total annual budget is allocated to development projects, adding, "The country is borrowing nearly \$147 million a day to cover its obligations." Proposing a bold solution, Mr Yahya suggested, "A five-year debt standstill is the only way to finance the SDGs in Pakistan." With the country's debt servicing consuming 51% of its budget, he argued that without immediate financial relief, Pakistan would struggle to fund essential development goals such as education, health and infrastructure.



The panellists also highlighted inefficiencies in Pakistan's public sector. **Dr Ishrat Hussain**, former Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan and former Finance Minister, pointed out that the issue was not a lack of finance, but rather the deep-rooted governance problems plaguing the country. "Throwing money at problems after they occur is not the solution," he said, lamenting that the real problem lies in the misallocation and mismanagement of resources. He said during his tenure, when \$1 was allocated to education, 81 cents were lost in the bureaucratic process before it reached students who were the targeted population for the funds.

Dr Jordanka Tomkova, Senior Digital Transformation and M&E Adviser, Innovabridge Foundation, Switzerland, offered a balanced perspective on technological advancement, acknowledging the importance of a phased approach. "Immediate automation will only displace labour, which often causes resistance to reforms," she said. Instead, she suggested that Pakistan should adopt a more gradual transition, focused on stimulating innovation and enhancing competitiveness in key industries. She said that it is better for Pakistan to build on what it already has instead of starting something anew.



In her concluding address, Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunications (MoITT), **Ms Shaza Fatima Khawaja**, said agriculture was the backbone of Pakistan's economy and we need to bring together data from multiple institutions of the country to find out areas where technical advancements can help them. She said: "I can comfortably say that we have embarked on this national journey where agriculture will be a priority." Even in SIFC ambit, agri-tech has done phenomenal work, she stated, adding that some highly efficient startups were also coming up in this sector across the country. She further added that our history is tied to agriculture, and it is crucial to make our agricultural industry more resilient.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In the context of an evolving global economic landscape, Pakistan faces both challenges and opportunities in building a resilient economy. Digitalisation has



emerged as a critical driver of economic growth, offering innovative solutions to age-old challenges and opening new pathways for development. In this regard, the following are important areas for policy-level consideration:

1. Propose a five-year debt standstill to create fiscal space for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) investments. Assess the implications of debt suspension on resource availability, fund disbursement, and investment outcomes.
2. Ensure transparent management and accountability of resources at the local government level to optimise the impact of budget allocations.
3. Develop strategies to maximise the use of limited resources, fostering environments that increase the efficiency and benefits of existing allocations.
4. Invest in digital tools and technologies to enhance agricultural productivity and facilitate global exports, prioritising Pakistan's agricultural potential for international trade.
5. Provide scholarships and grants for students in advanced research fields, especially those focusing on technology and innovation, to promote knowledge and capability building.
6. Strengthen partnerships between industry and academic institutions to drive innovation, with emphasis on collaborative research and development initiatives.
7. Establish digital skills programmes for students to prepare them for future job markets and support Pakistan's economic modernisation.
8. Focus on automation and the development of centralised digital finance platforms to support innovation across key sectors like textiles and agriculture.
9. Encourage a systematic approach to improve efficiency in the textile sector, focusing on labour management, finance optimisation, and digital skill application.



Thematic Session B-1: (Roundtable)

Role of Microfinance Institutions for Climate Risk Insurance

Moderator: Mr Asif Javed, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Chair: Mr Wazirzada Yasir A. Khan, Additional Joint Director, SECP

Presentation: Ms Zainab Naeem & Mr Umar Farooq, SDPI

Speakers:

1. Syed Bulent Sohail, Head Program & Partnerships IBA
2. Ms Khowla Shoaib, Head of Strategy, Mobilink Microfinance Bank Ltd.
3. Mr Mumtaz Iqbal, COO, Kashf Foundation
4. Mr Ali Basharat, Head of Operations, PMN
5. Mr Umer Baloch, Economist, TWB
6. Mr Anirudha Mirikar, Director, SELF, India (Online)
7. Mr Raza Narejo, DCD, Islamic Relief, Pakistan
8. Ms Rimsha Taj, AVP – Research, PMIC

Closing Remarks: Mr Hamza Ali Haroon, Regional Director, South Asia, CVF & V20

Panel Organisers: Ms Zainab Naeem & Mr Umar Farooq, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Aqsa Huma

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhX9zB6Zok4>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Pakistan's microfinance sector needs to revise its strategy to expand environmental risk insurance by enhancing climate risk coverage and promoting environment sustainability protection of the most vulnerable social segments from the disproportionate effects of climate change. This was the crux of a roundtable on the '**Role of Microfinance Institutions**

for Climate Risk Insurance'.

Speakers said with Pakistan's increasing vulnerability to climate change, conventional funding alone was insufficient to achieve climate resilience and required more innovation and products to be added.

Experts were of the view that climate risk insurance was more than just a financial safety, it was a critical tool for

sustaining livelihoods and protecting futures in climate vulnerable regions.

Mr Wazirzada Yasir, Additional Joint Director at the Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), proposed for launching climate risk insurance products through pool by several insurance companies to enhance its outreach at reduced cost. Instead of going parallel, Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) need to join hands to reach the untapped potential, Mr Yasir said, proposing that more tech people be included to give real data, pivotal for informed decision.



Head of Strategy Mobilink Microfinance Bank Ltd, **Ms Khowla Shoaib**, said the Bank had made several strides to bring the marginalised segments of society into financial inclusion through resolving female account owner App. She said the Bank was training women as well as launching incubation programme to enhance awareness campaign outreach.



Head of Operations PMN, **Mr Ali Basharat**, said the microfinance risk insurance was key for financial inclusion of marginalised segments of society including women and farmers who are the most affected by climate change. He also termed it a vulnerable market with a non-performing loan balance sheet of over PKR 58 billion in Sindh alone, against PKR 26 billion loans of commercial banks. He also recommended more investment in product development and subsidising premium to expand its outreach.

Syed Bulent Sohail, Head of Programme and Partnerships at IBA, spoke about the immense potential in the sector and emphasised the need for increased investment. He outlined key lessons for Pakistan while recommending dedicated climate risk insurance products, strengthening public-private partnership, expanding ESG and climate-focused lending and comprehensive climate adaptation programme.



Ms Zainab Naeem from SDPI while giving a presentation said that the rate and intensity of climate-related disasters had increased manifold, with climate change endangering economic stability. She emphasised that it was critical to ensure adequate funding for exploring

various projects actions and sustainability. that there potential for to climate adaptation intervention of offering a to vulnerable She stated that MFIs are crucial in delivering climate risk insurance through innovative strategies like technology integration and community-based approaches, though effectiveness varies across regions. She further added that enhanced regulatory frameworks, financial literacy initiatives, and public-private partnerships are essential for Pakistan to expand MFIs' role in climate risk management.



related to climate environment She added was immense linking MFIs c h a n g e a n d as a way helping hand communities.



COO, Kashf Foundation, **Mr Mumtaz Iqbal** said climate resilient strategy needed to be developed to protect the livelihoods and health of the most vulnerable communities.

Director SELF India, **Mr Anirudha Mirikar**, said the region was facing the same challenge from climate change.

Mr Umer Baloch from the World Bank said the role of MFIs was catalyst for financial inclusion. He also underlined the challenges faced by the sector including resource limitation, lack of finances, clients in remote areas and regulatory issues. He further added that the Bank supported microfinance for financial inclusion of marginalised.



Mr Raza Narejo from the Islamic Relief Pakistan highlighted the role of his organisation in leveraging microfinance to build resilience against climate risks in vulnerable communities.

Ms Rimsha Taj from the Pakistan Microfinance Investment Company Limited (PMIC) discussed PMIC's initiatives in integrating climate risk insurance into microfinance and emphasized the importance of capacity-building and innovation.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government agencies and policymakers should take the lead in developing climate-resilient insurance solutions and strategies, working to protect vulnerable communities and their assets in times of crisis.
2. Insurance companies and financial institutions should partner with the government to create and customise insurance products that address climate-related risks, ensuring these solutions meet local needs.
3. NGOs and community organisations focused on climate resilience can collaborate to design and implement strategies that effectively reach and support vulnerable populations.
4. Stakeholders and donors, including international development organisations, climate funds, and philanthropic entities, should provide financial assistance to fund and scale climate risk insurance products, offering critical support for communities affected by climate events.
5. The State Bank of Pakistan should collaborate with Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) to create regulations that would facilitate MFIs in offering climate risk insurance for low-income groups.
6. Government agencies and regulatory bodies should lead the integration of insurance into laws and policies, creating supportive frameworks that facilitate embedded insurance models.
7. Policymakers in collaboration with climate and financial experts should work to make climate insurance products legally available and accessible to those in vulnerable communities.
8. Industry stakeholders, including insurance companies and climate-focused organisations, should collaborate with government entities to design and implement policies that enhance the reach and effectiveness of climate insurance solutions.
9. Lawmakers should actively play a role in developing and implementing supportive regulations to enhance climate-resilient solutions for vulnerable communities.
10. Relevant organisations should implement innovative, technology-driven solutions to enhance crop and livestock insurance for rural and farming communities.
11. Insurance providers should expand and adapt their products to meet criteria for government subsidies, making climate risk insurance more affordable and accessible for vulnerable communities.
12. Government agencies responsible for finance, agriculture, and climate resilience should collaborate with insurers to establish subsidy programmes that encourage the adoption of climate risk insurance.
13. Technology companies and innovation hubs can work with insurers to develop advanced digital infrastructure and tools to improve climate risk data collection, analysis, and insurance delivery.
14. Relevant stakeholders should provide customised solutions to farming communities with livestock in rural areas where poverty is exacerbated by climate-triggered events and its devastating consequences.
15. NGOs and community organisations need to conduct community awareness sessions in collaboration with climate finance and insurance companies in areas impacted by extreme climate events.



Thematic Session B-2: (Roundtable)

Living Wage for a Sustainable Pakistan: Bridging Gaps, Building Equity

Moderator: Mr Abdullah Khalid, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Technical Presentation: Ms Fatima Arshad, Unilever – Understanding and Implementing Living Wages

Opening Remarks: Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad, SDPI

Speakers:

1. Dr Sebastian Paust, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany
2. Dr Asad Sayeed, CSSR, Karachi (Online)
3. Dr Azfar Khan, ARI (Online)
4. Mr Iftikhar Ahmad, Labour Law Expert, CLR
5. Mr Monis Rahman, Rozee.pk (Online)
6. Ms Nageen Akhtar, Head of Innovation, Bank Alfalah, Karachi

Panel Organisers: Engr. Ahad Nazir, Mr Abdullah Khalid, Ms Maheen Rehan & Mr Hammad Nadir, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Maheen Rehan & Dr Tayyaba Masood

Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZKfioG0S_k

NARRATIVE REPORT

Labour law experts and representatives of multinational employers came together to discuss ways to improve wages and protection for labour in a roundtable discussion on 'Living Wage for a Sustainable Pakistan: Bridging Gaps, Building Equity'. The session opened with **Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad** from Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) sharing the living wage statistics from Pakistan. In Pakistan, the minimum living wage ranges from PKR 36,000 to PKR 38,000 – Sindh being the highest, then Islamabad followed by the rest of the country.



"The people getting minimum wage, especially those who work on daily wages, are not given any other facility such as health insurance, etc., and are also punished by deductions when they take sick leaves or do not perform

up to the mark, which means that they are not even getting the minimum wage," **Dr Munir** said.

He added that this situation in Pakistan was not due to lack of regulation or government policies. "Not only have we signed the international agreements with the ILO but we also have labour laws, ministries, and forums for addressal," he added. Rather, he said, the problem stems from the fact that a massive economic portion in Pakistan was in the informal sector, which means

that despite the existence of laws, their enforcement is inadequate. Moreover, even if the employers pay the minimum wage, it is considerably lower than the living wage according to the economic situation in Pakistan.



Ms Fatima Arshad from Unilever gave a presentation on labour and wages. One notable point she made was that if the labour is protected and the minimum wages are at par with the living wages, that not only leads to better employee retention and satisfaction but may also

add trillions in the global GDP. She also highlighted that the gap between living wage and minimum wage in Pakistan was PKR 25,000.

Dr Asad Sayeed, from the Collective for Social Science



Research, Karachi, contributed to the debate by focusing on the agricultural sector. He noted that the informal sector constitutes two-thirds, if not more, of the agricultural sector.

“And it is imperative to bring it into the fold of formal regulated sector to close the gap between the minimum wage and living wage. Another way to reduce this gap is through social protection,” **Dr Sayeed** said, adding that he would talk about “reservation wage” which he defined as the minimum wage at which people were willing to offer their services.

According to some estimates, this reservation wage or floor wage in Pakistan is PKR 27,000 and our estimates of living wage are approximately PKR 55,000, **Dr Sayeed** said.

Dr Sebastian Paust

from the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany said that the EU is one of the biggest trade partners of Pakistan. “I have to regrettably say that the implementation of the conventions of the GSP+ status by Pakistan is dissatisfactory,” he said, adding “If this is not managed in the future, Pakistan, at least in the medium term, is at the risk of losing the preferential tariff”. But, **Dr Paust** said, this was only one of the metrics. “There are also supply chain laws, which apply to the social aspects of labour treatment,” he said, adding that “Living wage is part of that.” He further noted, “I don’t see the sense in the gap between the minimum wage and the living wage, the living wage has to be the minimum wage.” He said living wage is to avoid social unrest and to check crime rate, and he lamented that the crime rate of Pakistan is going up.



Talking about the appropriate methods to determine minimum wage in Pakistan, **Dr Azfar Khan** from Anker Research Institute (ARI) said that the strategies and framework used to determine the minimum wages should be constantly updated with the changing inflation trends in Pakistan.

Shedding light on the challenges that Pakistan faces in implementing labour laws, labour law expert from CLR **Mr Iftikhar Ahmad** said that in Pakistan one labour inspector was responsible for nearly 160,000 people. “Pakistan should make it easier for them to do their job, increase their mobility and also makes it easier for labour to file complaints,



for example though online forums,” he said, adding, “The number of labour inspectors also needs to be increased”.

Founder and CEO of Rozee.pk, **Mr Monis Rahman**, spoke on the rapid digitisation and how the AI holds the power to not only make unskilled jobs obsolete, but also allow fewer employees to do the work of a lot more people. “We should start training our employees at all levels in modern technologies to improve their skill levels,” he said.

Ms Nageen Akhtar, Head of Innovations at Bank Al-Falah said banking industry in general can play a vital role in addressing problems of living wage. Sharing the bank’s initiative to address the issue she said, “At Bank Al-Falah we have raised our minimum salary from PKR 35,000 to PKR 50,000. In a similar manner the salaries of our entry level employees is also PKR 50,000, which was PKR 40,000 last year, providing them fair chance to growth and financial stability.”

“What set us apart from the rest of the banking sector is,” she added, “we have raised the retirement age from 60 years to 65 years, giving senior citizens a chance to settle their debts and loans. She stressed that the Bank also provides to the employees house loans at a basic interest rate of 5%, same goes for auto-loan, personal loan and for other products. She said the Bank has introduced



budgeting and finance management features in its Alpha-App, which supports financial education not just for employees but for everyone in Pakistan.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government of Pakistan needs to:

1. Establish that living wages are not just a philanthropic initiative but essential for the economic productivity of workers. A living wage contributes to a thriving economy and promotes a sustainable business environment.
2. Set up effective and comprehensive data collection and analysis on living wages, particularly in rural settings, to guide policy formulation. This includes understanding wage disparities across different regions of Pakistan, such as rural versus urban settings.
3. Implement policies to close the gap between minimum wage and living wage in Pakistan by introducing targeted social protection measures and gradually increasing minimum wage standards.
4. Encourage collaborative effort between the government, private sector, and civil society to ensure that living wages are not only implemented by large organisations but also across supply chains.



- This includes working with smaller businesses and suppliers to ensure they meet fair wage standards.
5. Develop a clear regulatory framework to ensure businesses are incentivised to pay living wages. This includes providing financial or regulatory incentives to companies that adhere to living wage standards, while disincentivising those that do not.
 6. Recognise that living wages should vary by sector and region, considering factors such as the cost of living, healthcare, transportation, and education. The government should allow for regional minimum wage boards to set local living wage standards.
 7. Strengthen labour unions and other worker representation bodies to negotiate living wages and ensure that employers and employees are in alignment on wage standards.
 8. Address the impacts of climate change on livelihoods, especially for vulnerable groups who are most at risk from environmental disasters, by incorporating climate resilience into wage policies.
 9. Support civil society advocacy of the long-term benefits of paying living wages, including higher employee productivity, lower turnover rates, and overall economic growth with examples where businesses have seen growth after implementing living wage policies.
 10. Align local wage policies with international standards and conventions on labour rights, such as those set by the European Union (EU), to ensure Pakistan's competitive standing in global markets and improve export prospects.



Thematic Session B-3:

Ahmad Salim: A Life and Legacy

Dedicated to (Late) Mr Ahmad Salim

Moderator: Mr Abid Rasheed, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Opening Remarks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Documentary on the life of Mr Ahmad Salim

Chair: Mr Murtaza Solangi, Former Minister of Information and Broadcasting, GoP

Guest of Honour: Barrister Naseem Ahmed Bajwa, UK

Speakers:

1. Mr Panah Baloch, Writer, Balochistan
2. Mr Abid Hussain Abid, Progressive Writer/Poet, KPK
3. Dr Syed Jaffar Ahmed, Dean, Sohail University, Karachi
4. Mr Niaz Nadeem, ICF, Sindh
5. Ms Nuzhat Abbas, Poet, UK
6. Mr Rana Fawad, MD, QALCO, Qatar

Closing Remarks: Dr Humaira Ashfaq, IIUI

Panel Organisers: Dr Humaira Ashfaq, IIUI | Mr Ali Aamer, SDPI

Rapporteur: Ms Anum Fatima

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmgHz0LMaQ0>



NARRATIVE REPORT

The session titled '**Ahmad Salim: A Life and Legacy**' was attended by a number of writers and intellectuals who paid rich tributes to poet and progressive writer Ahmad Salim in a session on 'Ahmad Salim: A Life and Legacy'.



Former caretaker information minister, **Mr Murtaza Solangi** remembered Ahmad Salim as a true

Punjabi and Pakistani. He recalled that he had been an active participant of the Anjuman Taraqqi Pasand Musanafeen movement back in 1985. He said in Ahmad Salim's view, Pakistan was a nation and the provinces were its part. Prior to 1971, Bengal held an important place in Ahmad Salim's life, he stated, adding that the best thing about

him was that he could mould himself according to the place he was in. He could be a Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi and Pakhtun whenever he wanted, **Mr Solangi** said. The former minister said Ahmad Salim had the ability to link literature, culture and all other genres.

Poet **Ms Nuzhat Abbas** said Ahmad Salim had worked on the issues facing minorities, adding that he dreamt of a society where no one was exploited. She said Ahmad Salim was a great poet and a writer, possessing a progressive mindset. **Ms Abbas** said Ahmad Salim wanted all nations living in Pakistan to lead a peaceful life based on equality. In the yesteryears, he carried a pain for Bangladesh and in the present times, he felt greatly for Palestine, she said.

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, said Ahmad Salim spent the most time with SDPI and had become a face of the organisation. "Whenever we introduced the organisation, it would be with his name," he said, adding that he always kept his resignation letter in his pocket, and did not work for money. Paying tributes to him, Dr Suleri said Ahmad Salim had worked on research, poetry and prose writing as well as human and labour rights. In a nutshell, he was an institution in himself, **Dr Suleri** added.



Poet **Mr Abid Hussain Abid** talked about Ahmad Salim's love for books. He was an active member of the progressive movement therefore his relation with books was strong, **Mr Abid** said.

Dr Syed Jaffar Ahmed, Dean, Sohail University, Karachi, praised SDPI for organising this session to acknowledge Ahmad Salim and his services. He said Ahmad Salim had done an exceptional and commendable work in the fields of literature and journalism, which will be remembered. He was an intellectual and progressive writer. He characterized Mr Salim as a progressive writer, scholar, and opponent of dictatorship who supported democracy, women's empowerment, minority rights, and social equality. He said Mr Salim was a poet, writer, travelogue writer, and a social critic. Mr Salim was so fond of books and literature that he had a large collection of books, transcripts, old newspaper, articles from all over the world, and had a large archive in a library. Dr Ahmed while sharing Ahmad Salim's passion for books said, "He will skip his lunch and dinner and would prefer to travel for a book or article that he could get his hands on." He shared that Ahmad Salim wrote more than 100 books on literature, history, various interviews and current affairs. He said the late poet was committed to his point of view, talked less and wrote more.



Barrister Naseem Ahmed Bajwa said Mr Salim supported autonomy for

the Bengalis and wanted Pakistan to be made a federation. He had a great fascination for books, **Mr Bajwa** said.

Mr Niaz Nadeem from ICF Sindh said Ahmad Salim always spoke about the oppressed people and whenever there was talk about promoting language,

his name would figure out on the top.

Writer **Mr Panah Baloch** from Balochistan said Ahmad Salim's poetry always focused on the oppressed people, provinces, labourers and the entire country. When Balochistan's situation deteriorated in 1993, he dedicated an entire book on the province, **Mr Baloch** said.

Mr Rana Fawad, MD, QALCO, Qatar, paid his tribute by reading one of his poems (Actors do flop) from his book 'Kuliyat-e-Ahmad Salim'.

In her closing remarks, **Dr Humaira Ashfaq** from the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) said they had held a memorial reference after his death. "Now we have to live with his ideology to keep him alive," she said, adding that we also have to follow his thoughts, way of life and adopt his objectives. Dr Ashfaq said they had compiled the research undertaken by Ahmad Salim and uploaded it on sarrc.org.pk for the benefit of new researchers.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

South Asian Research & Resource Center (SARRC), founded by Ahmad Salim (Late), aims to support the development of a society grounded in equality and fairness, eliminating exploitation and ensuring that rights – such as those of women and labourers – are protected to improve quality of life for all people in Pakistan. SARRC plans to digitalise all documents to ensure easy access for future generations, making crucial information globally available to support knowledge-sharing and sustainable development. Future initiatives of the Center will focus on promoting sustainable practices that protect historical and cultural heritage while fostering balanced approaches to progress.



Thematic Session B-4:

Pakistan at 2047: Opportunities & Challenges for Today's Youth and Future Human Capital

Moderators: Dr Amna Khan & Dr Razia Safdar, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Chair: Mr Abdullah Fadil, UNICEF Pakistan

Panellists:

1. Mr Bilal Anwar, NDRMF
2. Ms Rabia Awan, PBS
3. Ms Cindy Kushner, UNICEF, Pakistan
4. Dr Nicolai Dellmann, GIZ Pakistan
5. Mr Jahanzaib Sohail, TWB
6. Mr Muhammad Bilal Abbasi, Ignite - National Technology Fund
7. Dr Safdar Sohail, SPRC
8. Dr Lubna Naz, CBER, IBA (Online)

Closing Remarks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, SDPI

Panel Organiser: Dr Razia Safdar, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Khadija Hasan & Mr Aftab Hameed Mirani

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUeVVEi0lqE&t=291s>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Speakers at the session on 'Pakistan at 2047: Opportunities & Challenges for Today's Youth and Future Human Capital' underscored the vital role of youth in shaping the future of Pakistan, highlighting the immense potential that young individuals hold and the critical need for targeted skill development initiatives to enhance community growth.

Dr Razia Safdar, Senior Policy Advisor, SDPI, while giving an overview of the theme of the session stated that given the current median age of 20.7 years, the speakers will be discussing issues related to climate change among the adolescents and young population. The session will explore ways to support this young individual in realising their full potential, focusing on human capital development under the framework of Human Capital Development for the Future: 2047. "In addition," she said, "We will look at gender equality, health, WASH,

nutrition, social protection, education, and green skill development, as well as women’s empowerment and digital inclusion in these sectors.”

The speakers emphasised that empowering the youth through social protection measures was essential for fostering resilience and enabling meaningful contributions to the nation’s economy. They said as Pakistan aimed for significant advancements by 2047, the insights shared during the discussion reflect a strategic approach to leveraging the potential of its youth for sustainable development.

Mr Abdullah Fadil from UNICEF Pakistan emphasised that Pakistan must consolidate its resources, noting that while the country was founded on a specific ideology, it must prioritise justice and equality. The youth of Pakistan felt disillusioned due to policymakers’ ineffective resource management, lamented the speaker. He highlighted the lack of social mobility in various regions of the country as a significant challenge. He advocated for a focus on population growth, health, education and climate change to build resilience in Pakistan.



Mr Bilal Anwar from the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) warned that failing to correct the course could lead to significant repercussions. He noted that 100 million young people currently lacked direction. “We do not possess adequate resources to invest in them. Engaging this youth demographic effectively is crucial, but the question remains: how can this be achieved? We must engage in discussions and formulate effective policies that provide them with a sense of ownership,” he said.

Ms Rabia Anwar from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) said Pakistan was experiencing a significant population growth rate. She said the youth required skills, yet there was currently no policy in place to address future needs. “By 2024, our population is projected to reach 480 million. If we fail to engage our youth, there is a risk that they may turn to criminal activities. Therefore, it is essential to prioritise education,” Ms Anwar stated.

Ms Cindy Kushner, Chief of Climate and Environment WASH, UNICEF Pakistan emphasized that poor WASH services severely impact the marginalized communities, especially young girls and women. This contributes towards health issues, educational disruption and heightened vulnerability to violence. Ms Kushner further stated that in Pakistan, significant progress has



resulted in minimizing the open defecation rate from 30% to 7% but 15 million people still practice open defecation. She said that economic losses from inadequate WASH services cost Pakistan \$4 billion annually, yet the development budget allocated is only \$5 billion, underlining a

significant resource gap. She stressed on focusing on fostering partnerships, finding innovative solutions and commitment to reach and help the most vulnerable sector in this regard.

Mr Jahanzaib Sohail from The World Bank stated that while Pakistan was experiencing natural disasters, there had been insufficient focus on mental health. He emphasised the crucial role of technology in addressing the importance of investing in primary education, healthcare and climate change.

Dr Nicolai Dellmann from GIZ Pakistan stated that Pakistan has a rich history of civilisations. He added that the organisation is investing in initiatives to enhance community development. “The private sector plays a crucial role during times of crisis. While Pakistan is abundant in green resources, it is not effectively leveraging its human and natural resources,” Dr Dellman said, adding that there is a need for Pakistan to focus on developing human resources, supporting local communities, and fostering entrepreneurship to transform into a significant market.



Dr Safdar Sohail, Executive Director of Social Protection Resource Centre (SPRC), emphasised the



need for Pakistan to prioritise a social market economy. He noted that while the country was concentrating on family, religion and social status, it had not adequately recognised the role of youth in society. He pointed out that the social programmes tend to emphasise the distribution of incentives rather



than providing protection. **Dr Sohail** expressed disappointment that there were no initiatives in Islamabad aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities, highlighting the lack of incentivised programmes for this group as a significant oversight.

Mr Muhammad Bilal Abbasi, General Manager, IGNITE – National Technology Fund, in his remarks with regard to resilience said, “We recognized the challenge posed by the country’s youth bulge and limited job opportunities. Hence, we initiated a programme for youth known as Digi Skills, where we registered over 4.5 million participants from tier 2 and tier 3 cities, with a significant representation i.e. 28% was from women along with marginalized groups such as the transgender community. This programme offers 25 diverse courses, collectively enabling participants to generate \$1 billion in freelance revenue over the past four years. Furthermore, we also helped them to establish businesses or the National Incubation Centers (NICs) across 18 locations in Pakistan. These NICs specialise in various sectors, such as climate tech in Lahore, agri-tech in Faisalabad, and AI, addressing the country’s pressing needs while fostering innovation.”



Mr Abbasi mentioned, “The key feature of our programmes is their operational model. While designed and funded by the government, they are managed by private-sector partners to ensure market relevance and

sustainability. This encourages leading companies in Pakistan to invest in and support the startup ecosystem, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.”

He said the focus is to equip individuals with skills in AI and other emerging fields. Reskilling efforts are vital to keeping pace with global advancements, ensuring that Pakistan’s workforce remains competitive. “Here I would like to add that 36% of the NIC program founders are women, underscoring efforts to integrate women into the economic mainstream and unlock their potential as significant contributors to the national economy,” he stated. These programmes aim to transform individuals into active economic agents by providing access to basic and advanced skills that enable them to earn independently and contribute to the country’s prosperity, he further added.

Dr Lubna Naz, Professor of Economics at IBA Karachi, said that climate change is reflected in policies, but they lack data assessment on loss and damage related to non-economic effects, such as mental well-being and emotional resilience. In collaboration with Oxfam, IBA has developed a strategic framework for non-economic losses and damages for Sindh government, she stated. “Our findings indicate that non-economic losses include anxiety, grief, depression, violence, and suicide among people in the future. Therefore, data collection is essential to integrate mental health into disaster reduction plans by prioritising institutional capacity and building community resilience in disaster management planning,” she added.

“In this way we can help develop a programme for communities to equip them with skills to reduce stress and trauma. For example, recently we implemented two scales called Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21) and Quality of Life Scale (QOL) in six districts of Sindh, which depicted that the children and women

are the worst affected by trauma and stress due the floods in 2022,” she stated. She stressed on the need to train healthcare professionals to cope with stress and trauma affected people in the disaster struck areas. Similarly, the government should introduce school-based resilience programmes for children.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is vital for Pakistan to:

1. Explore alternative financing mechanisms to support health initiatives and programmes.
2. Initiate a fundamental shift in addressing the country’s demographic challenges, focusing on sustainable population management and human capital development.
3. Address social mobility barriers to enhance awareness and engagement in social issues, especially among youth.
4. Engage government institutions in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) activities, actively involving and training youth in climate resilience, risk management, and climate mitigation.
5. Educate women in decision-making and family planning to help control population growth rates.
6. Leverage youth potential to drive economic growth, reaping the demographic dividend through targeted programmes for children, adolescents, and young adults.
7. Establish climate-resilient health facilities and rehabilitation programmes to ensure youth productivity for the future.
8. Increase investment in mental health and nutrition programmes for children, adolescents, and youth with a focus on climate resilience.
9. Ensure climate-resilient infrastructure and youth-friendly health initiatives.
10. Enhance digital and soft skills training to equip the youth for a competitive economy.
11. Prioritise IT initiatives for women empowerment

- to boost economic productivity and human capital development.
12. Innovate community mobilisation strategies to increase awareness and skill acquisition.
13. Integrate climate-resilient practices into Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) programmes.
14. Strengthen skills in green industries to promote economic growth and job creation.
15. Increase investment in domestic markets and natural resources to unlock Pakistan’s potential.
16. Empower informal economy workers, particularly women, and explore channels to extend social protection services.
17. Build solidarity among women workers to expand social protection coverage for female workers.
18. Integrate the disabled population into Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and financial protection schemes.
19. Train healthcare professionals in disaster mental health care for effective psychological support.
20. Equip community members, especially youth, with Psychological First Aid (PFA) skills for disaster response.
21. Implement school-based resilience programmes to support children’s mental health and education in disaster-affected areas.



Thematic Session B-5:

Building Resilient Health Systems in the Wake of Climate Crisis in South Asia

Moderator: Ms Khansa Naeem, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Chair: Dr Mehreen Mujtaba, MoNHSRC, GoP

Special Remarks: Dr Robert Marten, AHSPR, Geneva

Panellists:

1. Dr Usona Ghosh, PHFI, India
2. Ms Rabia Tabassum, SDPI, Pakistan
3. Dr Meghnath Dhimal, Environmental Health Scientist, Nepal
4. Dr Syed Manzoor Ahmed Hanifi, ICDDR-B, Bangladesh

Panel Organisers: Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Ms Rabia Tabassum & Ms Khansa Naeem, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Dua Mobeen & Dr Tayyaba Masood

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3hDuvCYPik>



NARRATIVE REPORT

In the session titled '**Building Resilient Health Systems in the Wake of Climate Crisis in South Asia**', panellists



highlighted the necessity for adapting strategies that enhanced climate and health resilience, supported by a robust and sustainable financial framework.

Dr Mehreen Mujtaba, Director of Nutrition at the Ministry of National Health Services (MoNHSRC) chairing the session

said, Pakistan is a signatory to health declaration at COP28, hence, is obliged to submit its Health National Adaptation Plan (HNAP). Due to lack of time, it could not be submitted this year, she stated. In this context, climate risk and vulnerability assessments were conducted in Punjab, Balochistan, and KPK, with the support of FCDO and WHO, who assisted in completing the assessments.

With WHO being the implementing entity, Ministry of Health has already applied for \$13 million grant to train the workforce across the country in terms of building climate resilience, she stated, adding, the Ministry is working on the resilience of Health Care System, looking at the various building blocks of the whole system. She stressed, with all the work that is being carried out, we will be able to present our case internationally on

a solid basis. With the support of international donors, Pakistan had completed a vulnerability assessment and was seeking a \$13 million grant from the World Health Organisation (WHO) to enhance training programmes designed to bolster climate resilience within health systems, she said.

Dr Robert Martin, public health policy specialist and lead Alliance work on non-communicable diseases said, in the 21st Century, climate change is the greatest threat to human health globally. "At Alliance, our strategy is to focus on how health systems can mitigate, adapt and build resilience for climate change," he added. **Dr Martin** shared that more than 80 countries around the world are decarbonising and building climate resilient health system. Recently commitments have been made by Japan and Senegal in this context. "However, we lack the shared understanding of what it entails and its effective implementation," he stated.

He further stressed that countries need guidance from where to start, what to prioritize and how to advance in this area. He shared that Alliance is supporting 12 countries since 2022 in research and sharing the findings across the region. "We believe Health Policy and Systems Research (HPSR) is a great approach as it helps in building climate resilient system based on determinants like public health, economics, sociology, anthropology, political science and epidemiology which all play vital role in shaping a good resilience system." In his final remarks he said fostering dialogues, building networks and strengthening local capacities are necessary for climate resilient health systems globally.

Dr Upasona Ghosh, Associate Professor, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), presenting her study on 'Climate Resilience of Health Systems in India', expressed her gratitude to Alliance for the grant to study the resilient health system in the context of India. She said, "We are focusing on key elements like the leadership and governance, health information systems, service delivery, and climate and health financing derived from WHO's climate resilient and low carbon framework of 2023."

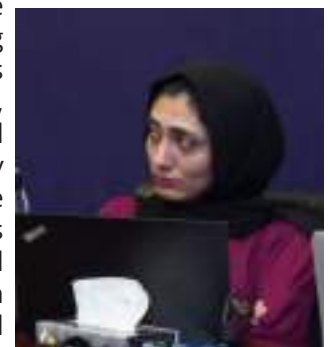
She shared the study's selected districts which included Jaipur in Rajasthan (desert), Puri in Odisha (coastal, cyclone prone), and Chamolic in Uttarakhand (landslide and flood prone) based on hazard mapping. "Our methods included literature review, budget analysis (government and foreign funds), and engagement of state and district level officials, health workers, disaster management team of the districts," she added. Sharing the findings, she emphasised the need for a skilled health workforce, effective communication strategies, the integration of climate components into training programmes, and lessons learned and best practices



for scalability and adaptation. "In the context of lessons learned, this session where speakers from India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh sharing their insights plays a key role," she added.

When presenting the case study in Pakistan's context, **Ms Rabia Tabassum**, Senior Research Associate, SDPI said this study assesses the vulnerability of healthcare facilities in Pakistan to floods, one of the severe climate hazards for us. The 2010 floods damaged 5.3% of healthcare facilities, escalating to 13% in 2022, with \$109 million in damages to the health sector. She further added that projections indicate a 33% increase in high-risk facilities by 2050, posing significant challenges to Pakistan's health infrastructure.

She shared that based on the WHO framework for assessing the vulnerabilities, the focus was on health workforce, energy, infrastructure and WASH, covering 41 primary and secondary healthcare facilities across four districts of Shaheed Benazirabad and Naushahro Feroze in Sindh and Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur in Punjab.



Ms Tabassum shared that 70% of facilities in these areas were partially damaged such as roof leakages, stagnant water and damaged infrastructure. Some 50% of basic facilities were non-functional due to structural issues. She further said, solar backups were found to be widely used due to power outages. Lack of planning in construction was noted such as poor site selection which is prone to flooding. Although the public-private partnerships projects showed better resilience, they faced challenges in enabling environment. Shortage of health staff was reported in 40% of the facilities, along with damaged roads towards hospitals. The technical staff also required targeted capacity building trainings. From the policy and governance aspect the national adaption plan lacked detailed focus on health infrastructure. The local governments except in

KPK province, were minimally involved in the disaster management efforts.

Ms Tabassum stressed that to cope with these challenges we need resilient infrastructure that includes elevated buildings, leak proof and have proper drainage system. Inclusion of disaster management course in healthcare professionals' curriculum and training of the paramedics and technical staff on climate crisis response are also recommended along with implementation of policies, proper usage of funds, and empowering the local governments to play their role in disaster preparedness and response as outlined in our National Adaptation Plan.

Dr Syed Manzoor Ahmed Hanifi, scientist and head of climate change, health, and population science at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR-B), discussed the issue of resilience loss in Bangladesh's health system due to climate change. He stated that the country's unique geography exacerbates climate-related health risks, particularly in vulnerable coastal and rural areas, placing additional strain on an already burdened health system. Rising temperatures, sea-level rise, salinity, and disease outbreaks are the key contributors, he added.

Dr Hanifi said, "We found higher malnutrition rate near the coastal region. Also, presence of high amounts of sodium in drinking water in the coastal areas is causing diseases related to sodium intake. Dengue and cholera outbreaks are at high levels, leading to an increased number of patients being admitted to hospitals, especially in urban areas like Dhaka." He shared that under the age of 5, mortality rates in coastal areas are 33% higher than the national average rate, with kidney diseases twice as high in the area as compared to inland. As for the post disaster health care, 64% of people are unable to access healthcare due to damaged roads and absence of medical staff at the hospitals. He recommended there is a need for incorporating climate health resilience into the Bangladesh's National Adaptation Plan, especially for the coastal areas.

Dr Hanifi stressed to invest in research and innovation for climate resilient health program, expanding its scope and engaging the local communities. He also emphasised on partnerships between the local and global stakeholders ensuring a coordinated and smooth efforts and fundings.

Dr Meghnath Dhimel, Environmental Health Scientist from Nepal said there was an alarming rise in climate-related health issues, such as heat-related illnesses, vector-borne diseases and respiratory problems, which were exacerbated by air pollution. He said the health sector must evolve to meet these challenges head-on, advocating for a comprehensive approach that integrated climate adaptation into health planning.

As the session concluded, the speakers united in their call for collaborative efforts among governments, NGOs, and the private sector to create a resilient health system capable of withstanding the challenges posed

by climate change. Their collective vision underscored the importance of proactive measures and strategic planning to safeguard the health of communities across South Asia in an era of environmental upheaval.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

These policy recommendations focus on building climate resilience within South Asia's health and social sectors by strengthening infrastructure, workforce development, financing, digital integration, and community engagement. Each thematic area addresses regional challenges while promoting collaborative and sustainable approaches to enhance the resilience of vulnerable populations against climate impacts.

1. Climate-Resilient Health Infrastructure

South Asian countries should:

- Develop climate-resilient healthcare facilities (HCFs) that comply with updated building codes, including avoiding flood plains for new construction, elevating buildings in flood-prone areas, and integrating Multi-Risk Hazard Vulnerability Assessments (MRHVs) into planning.



- Strengthen infrastructure post-flood reconstruction by ensuring adherence to climate-resilient designs and construction standards.
- Update planning and development processes to make HCFs more resilient, including ensuring robust drainage systems and sufficient power backups to support uninterrupted health services.
- Create an enabling environment for Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to improve healthcare infrastructure, with government incentives to attract private sector investment in resilient health facilities.

2. Capacity Building and Climate-Smart Health Workforce Development

Regional countries ought to:

- Build the capacity of healthcare professionals to respond to climate-induced health challenges, with specialised training in surveillance, disaster preparedness, and climate-health linkages.
- Integrate mental health support and counselling skills into medical training to help healthcare workers address trauma from climate events and support community resilience.
- Develop and retain a climate-smart health

workforce by continuously updating medical curricula and providing refresher training on climate-adaptive practices.

- Train local community health workers, particularly in disaster-prone regions to reduce the impact of climate-related disasters on secondary healthcare facilities.
- Establish school-based emotional resilience programmes to support children's mental health in disaster-affected areas, addressing the needs of young survivors.

3. Sustainable Financing and Investment in Climate-Resilient Health Initiatives

South Asian governments need to:

- Secure sustainable domestic and international financing to support climate and health resilience, ensuring funds are dedicated to long-term solutions.
- Encourage PPPs with government incentives to attract private investment in climate-resilient healthcare systems and infrastructure.
- Develop alternative financing mechanisms to support health initiatives aimed at vulnerable populations, including targeted support for children, youth, and adolescents.
- Promote climate-resilient health facilities and rehabilitation programmes that address the mental and physical health needs of young populations, ensuring they contribute productively to the economy.

4. Digital Health, Data Systems and Policy Integration

Regulators and the private sector should:

- Establish comprehensive digital health initiatives to create long-term data repositories for tracking health and climate data, supporting evidence-based policies and adaptation strategies.
- Conduct ongoing research on climate-health dynamics to support evidence-based policies, with a focus on region-specific data for South

Asian countries.

- Implement effective communication strategies to translate scientific research into actionable public health policies, sharing successful examples of integrating climate competency into Human Resources for Health (HRH) training.

5. Community Engagement, Social Protection and Vulnerable Population Support

Across countries, it is vital to:

- Engage communities in climate investment and policy decisions, ensuring that local needs and perspectives are incorporated into climate and health initiatives.
- Expand resilience initiatives to cover all vulnerable regions and scale up community-based early warning systems to mitigate climate risks, with a focus on rural and high-risk areas.
- Educate and empower women in decision-making and family planning to address population growth and contribute to climate resilience, particularly in rural communities.
- Strengthen local government roles in disaster-prone regions, equipping local authorities and health workers to mitigate the impact of climate events.
- Establish capacity-building programmes to educate local leaders, policymakers, and communities on sustainable practices, renewable energy, and resilient agriculture to drive economic growth and employment.
- Empower informal economy workers, especially women, by investigating ways to enhance social protection services and strengthen women's solidarity networks for improved support coverage.
- Ensure inclusion of the disabled population in Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and financial protection initiatives to support their resilience and access to healthcare in the face of climate risks.



Thematic Session B-6:

Bridging the Gender Gap: Empowering Women in Digital Banking and E-Commerce in Pakistan

Moderator: Ms Zainab Naeem, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Special Remarks: Dr Van Nguyen, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP Pakistan

Speakers:

1. Ms Nageen Akhter, Head Digital Innovation & Integrations Department, Bank Alfalah
2. Mr Pervaiz Iftikhar, Member PM's Council of IT, GoP
3. Ms Quratulain Chaudhary, Executive Manager, Mobilink Microfinance Bank Ltd.
4. Dr Fareeha Armughan, SDPI

Panel Organisers: Ms Zainab Naeem, Mr Umar Farooq, SDPI | Syed Talha Uddin Hyder, Bank Alfalah

Rapporteur: Mr Ibraheem Khan

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCBFRJWPh5I>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Experts called for urgent improvements in infrastructure, digital access, and financial literacy to break barriers and empower women, particularly in the rural areas. Digital banking and e-commerce present significant opportunities for women's financial independence and entrepreneurship, but persistent cultural and structural barriers limit access thus hindering progress. They made these remarks during a high-level policy dialogue titled 'Bridging the Gender Gap: Empowering Women in Digital Banking and E-Commerce in Pakistan'.

Dr Van Nguyen of UNDP Pakistan stressed the need for collective action. "We need to empower ourselves, as waiting for others to do so is not enough," she said. She highlighted the global nature of these challenges, stating, "After over 20 years of working with the United Nations, the issues faced in Pakistan are no different from those worldwide. We have not made the progress we hoped for; that is the reality."

Connectivity, **Dr Nguyen** emphasised, was essential for progress, saying, "We cannot move forward unless the government invests in it." She said connectivity, affordability and digital literacy were critical to enable people to effectively use technology, and called for actively involving all sectors to empower women. "If we don't claim our space, no one will give it to us," Dr Nguyen said.



Mr Pervaiz Iftikhar, Member of the Prime Minister's Council on IT, highlighted the connectivity barriers that affected everyone in Pakistan, especially women. "Things cannot progress if there is no connectivity as banking relies on it," Mr Iftikhar pointed out. He

criticised lack of progress in internet quality, particularly outside of major cities, noting that Pakistan lagged behind its neighbours. "Even when the internet works, there are frequent shutdowns and slowdowns," he said.



Mr Pervaiz Iftikhar also drew attention to the low mobile ownership among women in rural areas, with only 7% of them owning mobile phones compared to 20% men. He attributed cultural barriers to the limited access, saying, "The cultural behaviour keeps phones away, especially for women."



Ms Nageen Akhter from Bank Alfalah stressed the importance of financial literacy for empowering women. "We are offering digital solutions to address these problems, along with e-commerce solutions that allow women to start

businesses," she said, adding, "Our strategy focuses on financial education to enable them to earn money." She also acknowledged that men must play an active role in supporting these efforts.

Ms Quratulain Chaudhary, Executive Manager, Mobilink Microfinance Bank Ltd., said, "We have a program at our Bank called 'Women Inspiration Network (WIN)', giving them financial literacy, introducing our products such as loans and saving plans for women. We have also developed an app called 'Dost App' in this regard." She further shared that in the Bank's portfolio, 70% of consumers are from agriculture side, so the Bank is trying to launch such programs for women in rural areas. "We have an all-female branch, which we are converting into an incubation centre," she added. The purpose is to reduce the hesitance and also provide women assistance in establishing their own businesses. She said we also provide gold-backed loans to female borrowers. Under the 'Bint-e-Hawa' initiative, women are provided with 'Asaan Digital Accounts' and short-term loans with



flexibility in repayments. Ms Chaudhary emphasized that empowered women, equipped with the tools and support they need, can drive transformative change within their families, communities and beyond. "Without knowledge, financial inclusion is a hollow concept," she said, adding that Mobilink was providing financial literacy training in rural areas, along with micro-finance options and women-centric products to help empower women. She also stressed the need to involve men in these initiatives to shift mindsets and encourage support for women's economic activities at home. "We engage with them on the ground to understand their needs and tailor our offerings accordingly," she added.

Dr Fareeha Armughan, Research Fellow and Head of the Centre for Evidence & Action Research said, "I wonder why are we on the policy fault lines as we have such a strong identification of problem." She insisted



on compartmentalising discussions about digitalisation and e-commerce for economically disadvantaged and enterprising women. She highlighted that, according to the Female Entrepreneurship Index, Pakistan ranks last out of 77 countries, with women owning only 8% of enterprises in the entire entrepreneurial ecosystem. She further explained that significant progress has been made in digital empowerment within the domain of social protection, such as the issuance of ATM cards to beneficiaries and the dissemination of knowledge about POS mechanisms. Dr Armughan emphasised the need for collective action, urging policymakers, financial institutions, and development partners to collaborate and ensure the implementation of empowerment strategies.

The experts concluded that empowering women in Pakistan required collective effort, with both men and women playing an active



role, alongside critical investments in digital access and financial education.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure affordability of digital finance and e-commerce tools for women, enhancing accessibility to financial technology.
2. Foster collaboration across sectors (public, private, NGOs, academia) to drive digital empowerment initiatives for women in Pakistan.
3. Conduct grassroots studies to identify and address women's financial challenges with tailored solutions.
4. Establish a Women's Inspiration Network and provide financial literacy training to empower women in managing finances.
5. Encourage men to support women's autonomy in utilising their funds and accessing modern financial tools.
6. Address freelancers' challenges through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), improving their access to financial resources.
7. Tackle connectivity barriers to enhance access to emerging digital technologies, particularly in underserved areas.
8. Promote cashless transactions to increase women's active participation in financial matters.
9. Educate men on women's financial rights, fostering mutual involvement in financial decisions.
10. Facilitate access to loans and funding for women-owned businesses to boost entrepreneurship.
11. Address specific barriers faced by disadvantaged women in e-commerce and include low-income groups in financial repositories.
12. Encourage voluntary financial inclusion to expand digital banking and economic opportunities for women across Pakistan.



Thematic Session B-7: (Roundtable)

From Fragility to Resilience: Strengthening Tobacco Control in Pakistan

Moderator: Mr Wasif Naqvi, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, (SDPI), Islamabad

Chair: Prof. Dr Zafar Mirza, Director, STMU (Online)

Speakers:

1. Dr Minhaj us Siraj, Syndicate Health (PVT) Limited
2. Mr Anees Ahmed, CTFK
3. Ms Asiya Arif, SPARC
4. Dr Amina Khan, The Initiative, Islamabad
5. Ms Elvina Majiwa, Marketing & Communications Consultant Kenya (Online)
6. Mr John Thomi, NTA, Kenya (Online)
7. Mr Asif Iqbal, SPDC, Karachi (Online)
8. Ms Sania Ali Khan, STOP Pakistan
9. Ms Sana Ahmad, Blue Veins Organization, Peshawar
10. Dr Waseem Iftikhar Janjua, SDPI

Panel Organisers: Dr Waseem Janjua, Mr Wasif Naqvi & Ms Radma Nouman, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Mr Yahya Gulraiz & Mr Ali Zawar

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjuvT8ez134>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Experts at a roundtable titled **'From Fragility to Resilience: Strengthening Tobacco Control in Pakistan'** expressed deep concern over the growing tobacco consumption among Pakistani youth, with alarming statistics revealing that 1,200 children under the age of 15 start smoking every day in the country. The session brought together prominent voices from Pakistan and international stakeholders to address the urgent need for stronger tobacco control policies. Speakers called for stringent action to curb the influence of the tobacco

industry, implement robust taxation policies, and adopt international best practices to eliminate tobacco addiction in Pakistan.

Dr Zafar Mirza, Professor at the Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University (STMU) and former Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health said Pakistan should shift its approach from merely controlling tobacco to fully eradicating it, similar to New Zealand's successful model. Despite existing

regulations, progress remains slow due to inconsistent enforcement and industry influence, he added.

Dr Mirza said: "A tax earmarking mechanism for health budgets and engaging regulatory bodies like PEMRA to monitor media portrayals of tobacco are essential steps." He commended the recommendations of the experts during the roundtable advocating for the concepts of plain packaging and taxation as workable and helpful. "PEMRA should be taken on board to contain product placement of tobacco products in

entertainment industry. Moreover, tobacco taxation needs to be linked with earmarking of the health budget," he said.

Dr Minhaj us Siraj, Chief Executive Officer at Syndicate



Health (PVT) Limited, said the best practices globally were to publish graphic health warnings on the front and back of cigarette packets. "In Pakistan's legislative setup and implementation framework plain packaging is still a dream in tobacco control realm as interference of tobacco industry and legal challenges to it are

countered by the narratives of tobacco smuggling and counterfeit products by the industry," he said. "Tobacco control is an ever-evolving subject. Taxes must be increased more on cigarettes and others keeping in view the hazards and growth. The government has to prepare solid proposals to spend taxes collected from the tobacco industry," he added.

Mr Anees Ahmed from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free



Kids (CTFK) said: "Pakistan must strengthen its graphic health warnings on tobacco products and enforce plain packaging laws. International studies, particularly from Australia, have shown that increased visibility of health warnings lead to significant reductions in smoking rates." He said

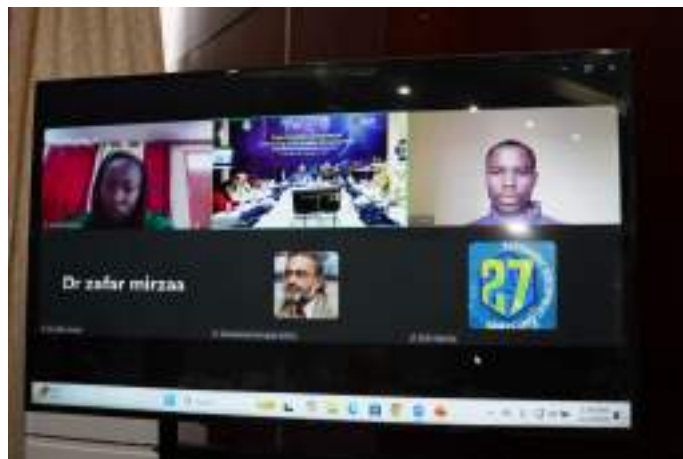
it was critical to address new products like nicotine pouches, which lacked regulation and were marketed aggressively to youth.

Dr Amina Khan from The Initiative Islamabad said,

"We need to transition to a tobacco-free Pakistan. Comprehensive strategies, including plain packaging and consistent tax hikes, have shown effectiveness worldwide." However, **Dr Khan** said, political will was essential for sustained progress. "Nicotine pouches, a growing trend, are a gateway to traditional smoking and must be brought under stringent legislation, as seen in neighbouring countries," she said.



Ms Asiya Arif from SPARC said the global best practices start from Australia not only from plain packaging of



cigarettes but also for other tobacco products as well. She called for more research to probe the hazards of Heated Tobacco Products (HTPs), vapes and e-cigarettes.

Ms Sana Ahmed highlighted the need for stronger provincial laws, noting that the KP government's attempt to ban nicotine pouches faced pushback from the industry. She added that, despite obstacles, KP had raised its tobacco tax from PKR 6 six to PKR 25, with plans for further increases to curb youth access.

Mr John Thomi from NTA, Kenya, called for a comprehensive taxation framework for tobacco products, including nicotine pouches, which often escape effective taxation and monitoring worldwide. He emphasised that such products were consumed across different socioeconomic groups and suggested that a track-and-trace system could reduce illicit trade.

Ms Sania Ali Khan from STOP Pakistan emphasised the need for urgent legislation to regulate products like Heated Tobacco Products (HTPs) and nicotine pouches in Pakistan, as these items increasingly tempt the country's youth and act as gateways to smoking. Ms Khan noted the severe health risks posed by nicotine pouches, which impact brain function and even DNA. With 1,200 children under 15 beginning to smoke daily, she cited measures taken by countries like China and India to ban such products, adding that the recent KP government ban on cigarette sales to youth under 20 was a positive step.



Speaking from Kenya, **Ms Elvina Majiwa** advocated for strategies that encourage youth to quit smoking to protect long-term health and finances, underscoring that tobacco industry profits should not come at the cost of public health.

Dr Waseem Iftikhar Janjua, Visiting Faculty Member at SDPI, said as a signatory to Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), Pakistan must prioritize

public health over revenue generation by implementing comprehensive and consistent tobacco control policies. He stressed on transitioning towards plain packaging of cigarettes packs without any branding, only health warning should be printed. Dr Janjua added that nicotine pouches, vapes, etc., should be categorized as tobacco products. He emphasized on more diligent track and trace system of tobacco products from production to selling points and similarly strengthening the same system for smuggled and imported cigarettes.

Sharing his views, **Mr Asif Iqbal** from SPDC Karachi noted that, while tobacco companies include health warnings and graphics on cigarette packs, they argue that plain packaging is constrained by copyright issues. He emphasised that, as a global practice, Pakistan should implement specific excise taxes and adjust them in line with income growth. "Strengthening the measures by the government such as eliminating the tax exemptions, counter measures to reduce tax evasion and track and trace system can enhance the efforts for tobacco control," he added.

The speakers urged immediate action to counteract the social and economic costs of tobacco consumption, which currently burdens Pakistan with a healthcare cost exceeding PKR 700 billion.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government health authorities should advocate for plain packaging of all tobacco-related products (including vapes, e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches) to protect child rights, seeing this as a necessary step despite implementation challenges. Drawing from best practices in countries like India and China, provincial-level bans and enforcement on sales to minors should be reinforced.
2. Regulatory bodies should classify nicotine pouches, vapes and e-cigarettes under consumer or tobacco

product laws, given their harmful impacts and popularity among youth. Regulations should include clear labelling requirements per World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, a 75-80% increase in graphic health warnings, tax measures, and strict sales restrictions to minors.

3. Legal and health ministries are encouraged to pursue renewed engagement with the Supreme Court, utilising legal avenues to address deceptive practices by the tobacco industry that have previously obstructed policy advancements.
4. Health ministries should apply a strict ban on unregulated and untested nicotine pouches, as these currently lack oversight. An outright ban could serve as an interim public health measure until comprehensive regulations are established.
5. Policymakers should classify nicotine pouches as tobacco products, emphasising their regulation under international standards like the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). Given limited quality control capacity, an outright ban on nicotine pouches may be necessary to protect public health.
6. Provincial governments should prioritise age-restricted sales bans and strengthen retail regulations for e-cigarettes, vapes and nicotine pouches. This includes expanding Peshawar's age restrictions nationwide to reduce youth access to harmful substances.
7. National and provincial legislators should support bans on electronic cigarettes, nicotine pouches, and flavoured tobacco products, prioritising child health.
8. Inter-provincial coordinating bodies should reinforce legislative support at the provincial level to counter industry influence, promote legislative efforts like those in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and work towards uniform policy development and enforcement across Pakistan.



Thematic Session B-8: (Roundtable)

Local Government System in Pakistan: From Challenges to Resilience

Master of Ceremony: Ms Sadia Satti, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Moderator: Mr Moazzam S Bhatti, SDPI

Special Remarks: Barrister Naseem Ahmed Bajwa, UK

Distinguished Panellists:

1. Dr Nafisa Shah, Co-convener Parliamentary Forum on Energy and Economy
2. Mr Muhammad Jawed Hanif Khan, Chairman, Standing Committee on Commerce, GoP
3. Mr Muhammad Riaz Fatyana, MNA
4. Syed Firasat Shah, Deputy Secretary General, JI Pakistan

Panel Organisers: Mr Moazzam S. Bhatti, Ms Sadia Satti & Engr. Ubaid ur Rehman Zia, SDPI

Rapporteur: Ms Sania Panezai

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTvLJwvNZo>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Parliamentarians speaking at a session titled '**Local Government System in Pakistan: From Challenges to Resilience**' highlighted the importance of local government system, saying that it was unfortunate that the system was not being strengthened, particularly in Punjab where elections have not been held at the grassroots level since 2021.

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director of SDPI in his welcome remarks, said if we talk about SDGs, the

federal government should support local governments in matters of environment, economy and other sectors. He said besides provincial governments, the local governments could also be activated for resilience, as in some matters, the federal government would need their support. Discussing climate change, **Dr Suleri** stated that carbon emission targets could differ between Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan, as the southwestern province's contribution to carbon emissions is very low.

MNA Ms Nafisa Shah, Co-convener of the Parliamentary Forum on Energy and Economy, stated that true



governance operates at the grassroots level. She emphasised that, regardless of holding positions such as prime minister, it is essential to engage directly with people at their doorstep. She said after the 18th Amendment, Article 140-A had been strengthened and now local governments had become a provincial subject, adding that there were challenges but even then, governance should be devolved.

Ms Shah said out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), most of them concerned local government system, including clean water and sustainable cities. "If we did not have local government system in place in Sindh, we would not have been able to reach the flood-affected people in 2022," the MNA said, adding that until political parties did not reach a consensus on local government, we could not move forward. She said there were three tiers of governance, two of which were functioning properly but not the local government.

All subjects under the ground should be with the local government, including sanitation and clean water supply, **Ms Shah** said, expressing her concern over the non-holding of local bodies elections in Punjab and Islamabad Capital Territory. The MNA said elections should be held within 90 days under the Constitution and the local governments should have financial autonomy.

MNA Mr Riaz Fatyana stated that Article 140-A is built on three pillars, yet none of them are visible in practice. He added that the last local government elections held under the party system took place in 2015. He said the Election



Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had been negligent of its duty to hold local government polls within the timeframe. He suggested that an amendment should be made to fix a date for holding elections on the pattern of the US where polls were held on 5th November after every four years.

He also deplored the fact that there was a leadership crisis due to ban on student unions and non-holding of local government elections, saying that local government elections were not being held in half of the country. **Mr Fatyana** said Articles 140A and 32 should be implemented, demanding that the ECP fulfil its responsibility and conduct local government elections. He stated that 95% of the roads in Pakistan did not have trees which was the responsibility of the local government.

Mr Jawed Hanif Khan, Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) leader and Chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee of Commerce, said efforts were being made for the last 70 years to hold local government polls, but the relevant authorities had failed to do so. The local government system is not being strengthened because they are not being provided sufficient funds, he said. **Mr Khan** said people know about their rights but they were being deprived of them, adding that these rights could be provided through the local government system.



"We have suggested amendments in the local government law to enable the local governments to collect taxes within their jurisdictions," he said, proposing that the local government should be

provided funds under the National Finance Commission (NFC).

He said there was no better system than governance at the grassroot level, adding that every village should have its own power grid powered by solar system so that they are not dependent on the national grid. He further said the local government representatives could work efficiently in sectors of agriculture and water resources.

Mr Firasat Ali Shah, Deputy General Secretary of Jamaat-i-Islami said no one could deny the importance of local governments. "We can learn from our neighbouring country India where the 'panchayat' system is still in vogue," he said, adding that local government system was also functioning properly in Bangladesh.

He said he failed to understand why this system was trampled, questioning the reason behind not providing



funds to local governments. "This system is currently being managed by the federal and provincial governments, whereas it should operate independently," he said, adding that it should not be discontinued at someone's whim. He said allocation of funds for the strengthening of local government system was necessary. **Mr Shah** suggested that efforts should focus on solar energy, highlighting Balochistan as an ideal location for its promotion, following the model of the Quid-i-Azam Solar Park.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. National and provincial governments should establish a constitutionally guaranteed and well-defined power structure for local government as a separate tier, empowering it to address urgent community needs in areas such as energy, economic development, health and education.
2. Community leaders and local government bodies should collaborate to hold inclusive forums for diverse communities, fostering consensus on local

aspirations and goals. These collective efforts will help reinforce the local government's capacity to address distinct community needs.

3. Parliament should consider a new constitutional amendment to designate a fixed election day for local, provincial, and federal governments, with all elections conducted simultaneously. This would streamline the electoral process and strengthen democratic governance.
4. Policymakers should study best practices from neighbouring countries regarding power and fund allocation from provincial to district levels, ensuring that local governments have adequate resources and authority to operate effectively.
5. Politicians and policymakers should approach policy development on a technical basis, focusing on evidence-based solutions to address local governance issues with expertise and precision.



Thematic Session B-9: (Roundtable)

Inclusive Crop Residue Management and Sustainable Agriculture

Moderator: Dr Jing Huang, ESCAP-SSWA

Opening & Closing Remarks: Dr Rajan Sudesh Ratna, UNESCAP-SSWA, India

Welcome Remarks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, SDPI

Speakers:

1. Dr Dushni Weerakoon, IPS, Sri Lanka
2. Dr Paras Kharel, SAWTEE, Nepal
3. Dr Babar Shahbaz, UAF
4. Mr Imran Shiekh, PBHF
5. Mr Anjum Ali Buttar, PSEP, Punjab (Online)
6. Mr Sultan Ahmed Bhatti, Farmers Representative, Gujranwala
7. Dr Razia Safdar, SDPI
8. Dr Kashif Majeed Salik, SDPI
9. Mr Irfan Ahmad Chatha, SDPI
10. Mr Umendra Dutt, KVM, India (Online)
11. Mr Karan Singh, KVM, India (Online)
12. Ms Rupsi Garg, KVM, India (Online)
13. Mr Usman Manzoor, GGPI
14. Mr Zawar Kazmi, Head of Agro, PepsiCo Pakistan

Panel Organisers: Mr Junaid Zahid & Ms Soha Nisar, SDPI | Dr Rajan Sudesh Ratna & Ms Jing Huang, UNESCAP

Rapporteur: Ms Faria Farooq

Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jp5aD4o_ZPU



NARRATIVE REPORT

Speakers at a panel discussion titled 'Inclusive Crop Residue Management and Sustainable Agriculture'

proposed the establishment of a SAARC agriculture centre to address crop residue and other agricultural challenges in the region. They emphasised upon the need for a robust national policy that involved farmers

as key stakeholders in the decision-making process. The speakers said burning of crop residue posed significant health risks, but it was essential to first consult farmers about their needs. The discussion highlighted the importance of incorporating health system resilience into policies, ensuring that farmers' perspectives on alternatives to crop burning were considered.

Dr Jing Huang, Economic Affairs Officer at UNESCAP-SSWA, India, while moderating the session mentioned that the panellists include government representatives, leaders from NGOs, academicians and most importantly the representatives of the farming community from India and Pakistan. "We will explore ways to develop more pragmatic policies and identify mechanized solutions for small farmers and foster collaboration among the stakeholders," she added.

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI in his welcome remarks said, "In today's session, we will discuss the effects of pollution in Punjab and South Asia, emphasizing its origins, which include burning crop residue, industrial activity, and vehicle emissions. We have brought together regional visitors, farmers, professionals, and UN representatives for the discussion. In order to combat air pollution and increase resilience, the goal is to promote cooperation, exchange experiences, and create group solutions."

Dr Rajan Sudesh Ratna, Deputy Head and Senior



Economic Affairs Officer at UNESCAP-SSWA, India, in his opening remarks said that this panel would build on past work addressing crop residue burning in Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Pakistan, exploring mechanized solutions, government policies, and farmers' challenges. He further mentioned, the session aimed to bridge gaps between policymakers and farmers to develop practical solutions. The session was designed to emphasize open dialogue, regional cooperation, and the shared impact of climate change, with farmers, experts, and regional think tanks contributing valuable insights.

Mr Irfan Ahmad Chatha, Head of CLD, SDPI shared that

his study highlights mechanization as a critical solution for managing crop residue, based on consultations with farming communities and experts. The shared machinery models, like group rentals for harvesters are promising but require scaling up alongside government incentives and awareness campaigns. **Mr Chatha** said farmers face challenges such as rising costs, labour shortages, and policy pressures, making it essential to adopt a balanced approach with both incentives and regulations. He stressed that addressing these issues can reduce crop burning and its environmental impacts while supporting sustainable farming practices.

Mr Zawar Kazmi, Head of Agro, PepsiCo Pakistan said in order to solve Pakistan's soil health issues, especially its low levels of organic matter, effective crop residue management is essential. PepsiCo in Pakistan, that has a big footprint for potato, is now introducing different solutions to the growers, he added. PepsiCo is giving priority to alternatives such as launching a biochar project with NUST for controlled residue burning and reintegrating residues into the soil. **Mr Kazmi** said, "The goals of our partnerships with Global Development Alliance (GDA) and Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International Archives (CABI) are to increase soil fertility and encourage composting." Furthermore, manufacturers employ biomassfuel as a stopgap measure, but managing and collecting residues requires substantial scalability. These programs demonstrate the necessity of teamwork in order to maximize residue usage and lessen climate-related issues.



Prof. Dr Babar Shahbaz, Director Academics and Professor, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad said Pakistan has implemented numerous policies to address air pollution, including the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act (1997), the National Clean Air Policy (2023), and the National Adaptation Plan by the Federal Ministry of Climate Change, which specifically tackles clean air and crop residue burning. He further said, additionally, Punjab instituted a Smog Commission in 2017 and introduced its first smog policy. Recently, measures like green lockdowns and school closures have been enforced to combat worsening air quality, with new notifications issued in cities such as Lahore and Faisalabad. Despite these initiatives, challenges persist. Farmers, particularly small-scale, often resort to burning



crop residues as a cost-effective solution, he added.

He stressed that collaboration between India and Pakistan is crucial given their shared air quality issues. **Prof. Shahbaz** shared that in the report 'The Air We Share' by SDPI, CSDR, and UAF, the importance of an integrated and multidimensional approach was also emphasised. He highlighted that addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts, bridging policies with practical support, to sustainably tackle crop residue burning and improve regional air quality.

Ms Rupsi Garg, Kheti Virasat Mission (KVM) mentioned, India's food security was brought about by the Green Revolution's transition to monoculture but there were also serious drawbacks such as health problems, environmental damage, and the decline of agricultural biodiversity. Due to irrigation advancements, traditional crops like cotton, once essential for living in Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan, were supplanted by water-intensive paddy. She said, as the machinery took hold, this shift weakened the position of women in agriculture and marginalized people who relied on farming for raw materials, upsetting the rural social fabric.

She mentioned that an environmentally friendly substitute is organic cotton, which is being promoted by programs like Kheti Virasat Mission. Cotton promotes intercropping with legumes, vegetables, and feed, which has both financial and environmental advantages. Cotton seeds and crop residue are examples of its by-products, which have several uses, including fuel and animal feed. By empowering women through training initiatives like the handloom weaving school in Faridpur, Punjab, reviving the cotton value chain will also boost rural livelihoods. Cotton's versatility addresses both economic and environmental issues, providing a pathway to sustainable agriculture and helping reduce reliance on wheat and rice monocultures, which contribute to challenges like crop residue burning and pollution, she added.

Mr Imran Sheikh said we need to ask why farmers were burning the crop residue. He mentioned that crop residue contributes less than 10% to air pollution. Farmers and harvesters have no capacity building or training, which is why they have been burning the crop residue. "This is no debate

about whether air from India is causing smog and health issues in Lahore. Air blows from Pakistan to India as well. Eating biryani is easy, but harvesting rice is a



challenging task. In our region, due to floods, no crop other than rice can be cultivated on a large scale," **Mr Sheikh** pointed out.

Dr Razia Safdar said smog undoubtedly led to significant health problems, highlighting the necessity of incorporating the health system into resilience policies.

Mr Umendra Dutt pointed out that this matter has transcended mere machinery. "It fundamentally relates to behaviour and psychology. While the Green Revolution has positively impacted the environment, it has also resulted in various health issues," **Mr Dutt** said, lamenting that the groundwater resources had been depleted. He said it was essential to engage with the government, adding, "But we must also take personal responsibility."

Speaking about the research at Kheti Virasat Mission (KVM), India, **Mr Karan Singh** described a method to prevent residue burning. He said that one environmentally beneficial method we have discovered is using a crusher or cutter to break stubble or crop residue and then spreading it across the farm and light watering the field afterwards. He explained that this approach takes 8 to 12 days for the residue to break down and benefit the soil. He went on to say that the stubble is rich in nutrients. For example, one acre of stubble contains 54% pure potash, as well as magnesium, phosphate, and nitrogen. "Additionally, it also aids in the development of microorganisms and preserves the soil's moisture content," he added.

Mr Sultan Ahmad Bhatti, farmers' representative from Gujranwala, emphasized the need for practical solutions to manage crop residue without burning, as awareness alone has not sufficed. He criticized the government's measure, such as fines and FIRs, suggesting alternatives like the Straw Management System (SMS) with harvesters, which enriches the soil by shredding and spreading residue. **Mr Bhatti** also endorsed no-tillage cultivation, a method he has been practicing for over a decade on his 1.5-acre farm, achieving a soil organic matter level of 2.5%.

Mr Anjum Ali Buttar, Project Director, PSEP, Punjab said Punjab had cultivated paddy on 6.7 million acres, producing 6.2 million tons in 2024, contributing significantly to Pakistan's \$4 billion rice exports last year. However, residue burning from rice crops poses severe environmental and health challenges, particularly in densely populated areas like the Kallar region, where 'basmati' rice is harvested. He further said, to address this, the government is promoting mechanized solutions, including Straw Management Systems (SMS), super seeders, and Kubota harvesters, alongside awareness campaigns and subsidies. **Mr Buttar** stated that although only 700 anomalies had been recorded so far, over 133 FIRs had been filed, and fines worth over PKR 11 million had been collected. While such punitive actions are being enforced, residue management and mechanization are emphasized to enhance soil organic matter and reduce smog, he added. External factors,



such as industrial pollution and cross-border winds exacerbate the smog problem in Lahore.

Mr Usman Manzoor, Senior Program Officer at Pakistan Country Office, GGGI, highlighted that effective policy making for residue management must actively involve both large and small landholding farmers, alongside local government departments to ensure implementation. Small farmers often excluded from technological advancements could benefit from shared access to machinery or rental systems facilitated by influential community members. He emphasised the need to promote local manufacturing to empower farmers. "We have seen that Pakistan's agricultural GDP

ratio has fallen from 70% to 44% and now it is 22.7%, threatening the food security in Pakistan," **Mr Manzoor** added.

Dr Kashif Salik, Research Fellow at SDPI said transport emissions, industrial pollution, and burning crop residue are the main causes of smog in cities, particularly Lahore. Delays in rain and shifting winds make the problem worse. He stressed that farmers, government and the corporate sector must work together to address this. Incentives and easily accessible technologies are necessary for farmers, and local governance needs to be improved for accountability. **Dr Salik** said while private sector participation and ongoing research are crucial for sustainable solutions, the government should concentrate on capacity building and long-term policies. The focus should also be on increasing soil organic matter, reducing smog, and prioritising management and mechanisms to achieve these goals. He also emphasized on strengthening the 'panchayat' system and linking it to local government.



Dr Dushni Weerakoon, Executive Director, IPS, Sri Lanka said crop burning is a localized issue with significant trans-border implications, affecting multiple countries in the region like Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. She further added that to counter this hazard, a mechanism for residue management



and financial assistance to discourage crop burning could be implemented, as simply banning the practice may not be effective. Listening to the discussion, she added that there seems to be no clear financial strategy or collaborative framework between stakeholders i.e. government, private sector and farmers.

Dr Paras Kharel, Executive Director, SAWTEE, Nepal, said from the discussion it seems that crop residue burning is a compulsion for farmers but has significant impact on climate. He emphasized on national policies along with regional coordination among the countries in terms of joint studies and sharing experiences can be an advantage in finding solutions. In this regard, the SAARC Agriculture Centre serves as an excellent platform for fostering collaborations, and the fund established by the organisation can be utilised for research and development, which is essential for finding implementable solutions. He shared the example of Nepal where crop residues are used as cattle feed, for making handicrafts and for mushroom cultivation.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

South Asian governments need to focus on the following key areas:

1. **Farmer-Centric Policies and Community Engagement:** Develop inclusive policies by involving farmers in decision-making and consulting them on specific needs and challenges. Use community platforms, like the 'panchayat' system, to enhance

local ownership and encourage farmers to adopt eco-friendly practices.

2. **Health and Environmental Awareness:** Raise health awareness among farmers regarding the impacts of crop residue burning and promote resilient health systems to support communities affected by agricultural practices. Prioritise sustainable farming techniques, such as organic farming, to protect soil health and longevity.
3. **Training, Resources and Private Sector Linkages:** Provide farmers with necessary training, equipment, and technical support to adopt sustainable residue management practices. Facilitate partnerships with the private sector and develop profit models that incentivise private investment in sustainable agriculture.
4. **Data Sharing, Collaborative Research and Regional Coordination:** Encourage joint studies and data-sharing initiatives, both within Pakistan and with regional bodies like South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), to gain insights into crop residue management. Establish collaborative regional monitoring and knowledge exchanges on sustainable practices, technologies and equipment.
5. **Policy Support and Political Will:** Implement robust, long-term policies that address the root issues of crop residue management. Ensure political commitment by advocating for unified action across stakeholders, enabling consistent and effective implementation that supports smog reduction and agricultural sustainability.



Thematic Session B-10: (National Level Policy Dialogue) Circularity and Used Textile Trade

Moderator: Ms Zainab Naeem, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Chair: Mr Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs of Pakistan, GoP

Speakers:

1. Mr Asad Naqvi, UNEP, Geneva
2. Mr Jeroen Willems, EU Delegation to Pakistan
3. Ms Yulia Bazhenova, GLZ, Germany
4. Mr Mustafa Sattar, Retex Global & KEPZ, Karachi
5. Mr Mudassar Raza Siddiqi, DG (Textile), Ministry of Commerce, GoP

Closing Remarks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Panel Organisers: Ms Zainab Naeem & Ms Amna Arooj, SDPI

Rapporteur: Ms Amna Jamshaid

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DquF-BBZHug>

NARRATIVE REPORT

While speaking at the policy dialogue session on 'National Policy Dialogue on Circularity and Used Textile Trade in Pakistan', speakers said that Pakistan was among the top importers of second-hand textiles mostly exported by the European Union, needed green measures to ensure sustainability and circularity as refurbishment of such goods burdened local water and energy resources. Many SMEs are associated with the textile sector, significantly contributing to the country's economy. It is estimated that the global textile industry, valued at \$1.6 trillion in 2023, will grow to \$3.3 trillion by 2030, they added.



Mr Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs of Pakistan revealed that thousands of tonnes of cargo were being dumped at the Karachi Port, saying the government was planning to either auction or send back polluted cargo to its originating countries as they were producing waste and pollution. Complaints were being received that developed countries dump polluted cargo at Karachi Port having no claimant, which was

creating waste and pollution, said the Minister.

The Minister said textile was one of the major businesses in Pakistan, with used textile goods providing affordable stuff as 40% population - 100 million people - was living below the poverty line. He said more than 430,000 metric tonnes of used clothing arrived in Pakistan in the fiscal year 2023-24 with the support of port and shipping infrastructure. He emphasised the vital role of Pakistan's maritime infrastructure in facilitating the import of second-hand textiles, adding that he recognised that the efficient handling of these imports was essential for supporting local economies, job creation, and textile recycling efforts. The Federal Minister further said his ministry was focusing on improving port efficiency and container management to streamline the processing of these goods, ensuring that shipments were processed in a timely and cost-effective manner. The Minister also outlined the ongoing efforts to develop waste sorting hubs for textile recycling, a key step in managing textile waste and reducing the environmental impact of global textile trade.

Mr Mudassir Raza Siddiqi, Director General of Textiles at the Ministry of Commerce, stated that circularity in textiles has created approximately two million jobs in Pakistan. He also discussed the government's intervention through the Export Development Fund, which is still ongoing.

He shared that second-hand clothing plays a vital role in Pakistan's economy as 72% of imports in this segment come





from the United States and the European Union, with 80% of the clothing re-exported to Africa and Asia, two of Pakistan’s largest markets. Similarly, it also creates employment opportunities as around 2 million people directly and around 6 million indirectly connected to this sector.

Mr Siddiqi expressed that the Ministry of Commerce provides financial incentives for sustainable practices through various schemes, including duty-free import of raw materials for re-export and rationalization of tariffs under the National Tariff Policy Board. He said that Pakistan has also aligned its policies with ‘EU strategy on sustainable circular textiles’. He shared that strict customs actions are being implemented to address grey channel clothing imports. He further mentioned that a \$1 million project was recently approved to enhance supply chain traceability, demonstrating Pakistan’s commitment to circular economy principles.

Mr Asad Naqvi, Head of the Economic and Trade Policy Unit at UNEP, stated that second-hand textiles play an important role for underprivileged communities as well as for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the value chains surrounding them. He added that while the import of second-hand textiles significantly contributes to circularity, it also incurs additional costs in terms of the energy and water required for refurbishing these textiles.



Mr Jeroen Willems, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Pakistan, said used textiles were effectively being exported to Pakistan, Ghana and Tunisia by Europe and the demand of second-hand

textiles would double globally. “Pakistan is among the top importers of such second-hand textiles. In the EU, there is a notion of ‘fast fashion’ in which on average people discard a shirt after using it seven times resulting in a huge waste of many resources such as energy, water, and chemicals,” he added. Mr Willems said the EU was developing rules regarding effective sorting of clothes that were to be reused or recycled.



Ms Zainab Naeem from SDPI delivered a presentation highlighting the current scale of second-hand clothing imports in Pakistan, which increased had by 17% in 2023-24, reaching 433,651 metric tonnes and generating over \$40 million in revenue.

Ms Yulia Bazhenova from GIZ, Germany, said that the second-hand clothing and recycling sector, especially hubs like Karachi and Faisalabad, holds significant potential for Pakistan within the global circular economy. She stressed on expanding the industry in a sustainable way with capacity building and upgraded technology essential to achieve Global Recycle Standards (GRS) certification and international compliance. Ms Bazhenova emphasized that such measures can help Pakistan to compete in international markets.



Mr Mustafa Sattar, Retex Global & KEPZ, Karachi, said that second-hand clothing industry holds great importance in the context of Pakistan. Pakistan along with other global hubs like Dubai, Houston and Toronto, has emerged as a leader in processing used textiles. He emphasised that the sector also faces challenges, such as sudden changes in tax regulations, which disrupt long-term planning and deter foreign direct investment



(FDI). He noted that China, which is capturing markets in Africa and South America, poses significant competition. He emphasised that offering incentives and subsidies would strengthen the industry, thereby positioning Pakistan as a leader in sustainable textile processing.

2. The Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Government of Pakistan, need to encourage ship recycling and promote green fuelling methods to reduce pollution. Textile and manufacturing associations should support new recycling technologies and eco-friendly practices, especially water treatment for chemical-intensive processes.
3. Government bodies like the Ministry of Commerce and Board of Investment (BOI) should create policies for sustainable expansion in the textile industry by establishing export processing zones and providing licenses to businesses that meet sustainability standards. Environmental agencies should ensure compliance with water treatment and other eco-friendly requirements.
4. The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) should implement low taxation and subsidies for circular textile businesses, which will encourage sustainable practices and boost exports. These incentives will help attract investment in environmentally responsible business models within the textile sector.
5. Pakistan Single Window and Ministry of Commerce need collaborate to gather data on the used textile trade. Policy advisory bodies should use this data to adjust regulations and align Pakistan's practices with global circular economy standards, promoting transparency and sustainable trade practices.

In his concluding remarks, **Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri**, Executive Director, SDPI thanked the esteemed speakers. He shared that, in collaboration with UNEP, a study is being conducted to dispel myths surrounding imported clothing, examining its pros and cons and evaluating its contribution to waste and carbon emissions. He shared that an SDPI study reveals even the last piece of imported clothing is utilised as a duster or mop, demonstrating 100% circularity in Pakistan. He added that it is important to consider the perspectives of both manufacturers and consumers, as well as the potential for leveraging this utilisation to generate green credits. He concluded by saying that more similar sessions are needed to deepen understanding of this sector, its impact on local manufacturers, their concerns, and the potential benefits it offers.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Ministry of Commerce and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Government of Pakistan, needs to develop policies to prevent polluted textile cargo from entering Pakistan and enforce the return of such shipments to the exporters in developed countries. Trade regulatory bodies should work with international partners, including the European Union (EU), to align with waste shipment regulations and hold exporting countries accountable.



Thematic Session B-11: (High Level Pre-COP29 Policy Dialogue) Green Financing and Climate Action through Private Sector

Moderator: Dr Khalid Waleed, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Chair & Closing Remarks: Dr Muhammad Rafiq, Member Climate Finance, PCCA

Speakers:

1. Mr Jason Avancena, OICCI
2. Mr Samuel Rizk, UNDP
3. Mr Sheikh Waqar Ahmad, Nestlé Pakistan
4. Ms Fatima Arshad, Unilever Pakistan
5. Mr Adnan Pasha Siddiqui, Habib Bank Limited (HBL)
6. Mr Farooq Pasha, Standard Chartered Bank (SCB)
7. Mr Fawad Soomro, Engro Foundation

Panel Organisers: Ms Saleha Qureshi & Dr Khalid Waleed, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Aqsa Huma & Mr Sarim Zia

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zg0S2hZguyg>



NARRATIVE REPORT



Mr Samuel Rizk, Country Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), offered Pakistan a range of “bankable transactions”, emphasising that the success of projects hinged

on Pakistan’s ability to present them to banks and act swiftly to capitalise on rapidly changing technology and environmental conditions. “We have the funds, and we can offer Pakistan bankable projects,” **Mr Rizk** said while addressing a high-level pre-COP29 policy dialogue titled ‘Green Finance and Climate Action through Private Sector’. He acknowledged Pakistan’s resilience despite challenges, including devastating floods, security issues

and economic instability.

He highlighted the nation’s remarkable turnaround from a near default in June 2023, stating, “Things are positive now for private investment, but the government should make life easier for investors.” The UNDP’s representative said Pakistan’s progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) had been limited, estimating it would require \$52 billion to achieve the targets by 2030. “Pakistan needs new, fresh money, not rollover funds. Private investment is critical not only for climate goals but also for achieving broader development objectives,” he added.

Mr Jason Avancena from the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) underscored the private sector’s commitment to sustainability, saying, “OICCI has cultivated dialogue for an actionable policy to address climate change, including mobilising capital for decarbonization.” The OICCI members aim to increase water recycling by 35% and reduce plastic use by one-third, he added.

Ms Fatima Arshad from Unilever Pakistan expressed willingness to advocate globally for investment in Pakistan, stating, “We can leverage our network to help Pakistan invest in bankable projects.” While acknowledging challenges with plastic alternatives,



she emphasised the availability of funds if viable projects were identified.



Mr Adnan Pasha from HBL emphasised the Bank's dedication to climate-friendly initiatives, noting that its clean energy portfolio is valued at PKR 30-35 billion and continues to grow. "We are working in the agriculture sector, assisting farmers with agronomic advice through our 87 agronomists. This is the way forward for economic growth," he said, encouraging other banks to join in similar efforts.

Mr Farooq Pasha from the Standard Chartered Bank proposed utilising philanthropic funds to bridge Pakistan's climate finance gap, suggesting a focus on innovative financing for both mitigation and adaptation projects.



Mr Fawad Soomro, Head of Engro Foundation, emphasised the need for innovative partnerships, including collaborations between the public and private sectors, to address challenges faced by new starters.

He suggested that forums could serve as accelerators, allowing individuals to pitch their ideas and investment needs, as demonstrated at a recent FCDO-funded event in Karachi. He further noted that due to limited access to carbon markets, biochar — a valuable carbon-reducing material and excellent fertiliser for soil — remains underutilised. Mr Soomro stressed on developing methodologies for carbon credits and said that the use of philanthropic capital can help fund high risk pilot projects in addressing current financial gaps.



Mr Sheikh Waqar Ahmad, Head of Corporate Affairs and Sustainability in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Nestlé, said, "we at Nestlé have a clear sustainability agenda, which consists of climate action, sustainable packaging and water conservation." He added that Nestlé has invested in renewable energies e.g. solarizing factories in Kabirwala and Sheikhpura, and establishing a biomass plant which utilizes 37,000 tons of agriculture waste annually. Furthermore, Nestlé is committed to reducing its environmental footprint by cutting virgin plastic usage by one-third by 2025. To support this goal, it has provided machinery that enables factories to recycle over 4,000 tons of plastic and paper packaging annually. Nestlé, in partnership with farmers, has introduced drip irrigation systems, smart moisture sensors, and advanced water-conserving techniques under its 'Caring for Water' initiative, he added.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Ahead of COP29, these recommendations highlight actionable strategies to enhance green financing and climate resilience in Pakistan, aligning national efforts with global climate objectives:

1. **Establish a National Climate Change Fund:** Create a dedicated fund to support climate adaptation and mitigation projects, with a transparent monitoring and reporting framework to ensure accountability and track the impact of funds on climate goals.
2. **Expand Access to Blended Finance and De-risking Mechanisms:** Develop blended finance models and de-risking tools to attract private investment in green projects, particularly for startups, renewable energy, and climate-smart agriculture.
3. **Public-Private Partnerships and Policy Alignment with SDGs:** Promote strong collaboration between public and private sectors, ensuring all initiatives align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to enhance climate resilience. Government incentives can further drive private sector investment in sustainable practices.

4. **Implement Climate Risk Assessments and Regulatory Support for Green Bonds:** Mandate climate risk assessments in the financial sector and support green bonds and sustainability-linked loans. These measures encourage banks and businesses to integrate climate resilience into their investment and operational decisions.
5. **Empower Vulnerable Communities through Climate Insurance and Resilient Infrastructure:** Offer climate risk insurance and resilience-building programmes targeted at vulnerable populations. Expand support for climate-resilient infrastructure, with philanthropic funding and strategic use of global funds like the Loss and Damage Fund.
6. **Promote Circular Economy and Sustainable Waste Management:** Foster circular economy practices, reducing waste and carbon footprints across industries. Implement sustainable waste management systems in line with global best practices to support a regenerative economy.
7. **Adopt Renewable Energy and Sustainable Agricultural Practices:** Invest in renewable energy projects (e.g., solar, wind) and sustainable agricultural practices, including hydroponics and greenhouses, to reduce reliance on non-renewable resources and improve food security in climate-stressed areas.
8. **Engage with International Carbon Markets and Global Initiatives:** Facilitate access to international carbon markets, enabling Pakistan to benefit from carbon trading. Participate actively in international climate initiatives to align with global standards and leverage financial support for local climate resilience efforts.
9. **Technology and Innovation for Climate Solutions:** Support development and adoption of advanced technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), to create climate-resilient infrastructure and data-driven agricultural practices. This can improve climate adaptation strategies and enhance sustainability.
10. **Data-Driven Decision-Making and Knowledge Sharing:** Build a robust data infrastructure through the use of digital tools and data collection on climate impacts. Facilitate knowledge-sharing platforms to ensure stakeholders can access and utilise this data for effective decision-making and regional collaboration.
11. **Strengthen Local and Regional Capacity Building:** Invest in capacity-building programmes for local governments, institutions, and communities to implement and sustain green financing initiatives effectively. This includes training programmes for climate-smart agricultural practices and sustainable water management at the grassroots level.
12. **Focus on Water Management in the Textile and Agriculture Sectors:** Given the water-intensive nature of these industries, promote adoption of water-efficient technologies and practices, such as wastewater recycling and precision irrigation, to support sustainable development.
13. **Encourage Knowledge Exchange and Regional Collaboration:** Establish a platform for cross-border knowledge sharing within South Asia (e.g., through SAARC), allowing for regional cooperation in green finance, policy alignment, and climate resilience efforts.
14. **Support for Digital Transformation in Climate Financing:** Encourage digital tools and platforms that enhance transparency, track funding, and streamline processes within climate finance, facilitating better management of resources and clearer accountability.
15. **Incentivise Eco-Friendly Certification Programmes:** Promote eco-certification for businesses and products to encourage sustainable practices across industries, which can also improve access to international markets and attract green investors.



Thematic Session B-12:

Societal Cohesion: Promoting Tolerance and Peace for Inclusive Development

Moderator: Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Distinguished Speakers:

1. Senator Farhatullah Babar, PPP
2. Senator Afrasiab Khattak, ANP
3. Ms Zebunnisa Burki, The News International, Karachi
4. Dr Syed Kaleem Imam, Former Federal Secretary, MNC, GoP
5. Ms Asma Shirazi, Senior Journalist & Anchor
6. Ms Karon Shaiva, IDOBRO & RIF, India (Online)
7. Dr Saber Ahmed Chowdhury, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh (Online)
8. Mr Dushyanth Weeraman, Sri Lanka
9. Ms Farwa Zafar, KKAFF

Panel Organisers: Mr Abid Rasheed, Ms Tayyaba Hanif & Ms Uzma T. Haroon, SDPI

Rapporteur: Mr Nazar Muhammad

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDPWOGXTawA>

Narrative Report

Speakers at the podium discussion titled ‘**Societal Cohesion: Promoting Tolerance and Peace for Inclusive Development**’ said no societal development was possible without social cohesion nurtured on the pedestals of tolerance and peace.



Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad, Deputy Executive Director, SDPI, while moderating the session, said social development was a tedious and responsible task that required stakeholders’

attention, targeted interventions, and rigorous community-based interactions to ensure inclusive development and unity among all tiers of society.

Senator Farhatullah Babar of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), in his remarks, said the state of Pakistan had disregarded the minorities and peripheries of the federation that developed sentiments of neglect and



resulted in their dilapidated situation. He recommended that the root cause of the problem emerged out of the DNA of Pakistan’s state which was a security-driven state and not a welfare state as all its decisions were made through the security lens.



Senator Afrasiab Khattak of Awami National Party (ANP) said lack of peace and tolerance in the society had sprouted from the policy decisions taken by the state. He pointed out that there was a friction in the federation due to less representation of the marginalised and least-developed areas.

“There will be no tolerance in the country or its society if no legislation made held the powerful accountable as oppression can never go popular. Moreover, religious extremism is a serious menace in the society that has been injected into our system while breeding the war economy,” he lamented. He recommended reviewing the national curriculum to eliminate hate-driven content in order to combat extremism and violence. He emphasised that without a change in state policy, extremism and intolerance would persist.

Ms Zebunnisa Burki from The News International, Karachi, stated that the majority of the Pakistani audience



consists of Generation Z and Generation Alpha, and who need to have direct and interactive communication. She added that social media had opened up numerous opportunities to engage with the younger generation, providing a platform to educate them about stereotypes that foster intolerance. She further added that optimistically, there is a way to promote tolerance and peace in society. However, since social

media debates are often ill-informed, this needs to be addressed, as the platform should be used to educate the youth.

Ms Karon Shaiva from IDOBRO & RIF, India, stated that fostering societal cohesion and peace is essential, as cohesion reflects stability and strength, which serve as the foundation for societal development. "Development is not only infrastructure and economics but also societal as the ultimate measure of success indicator is peace that as a practical measure gives resilience to bear crisis that cannot be achieved in silos," Ms Shaiva said. "We need to create more opportunities to connect to develop cohesion that will lead to sustainable and enduring development and peace. We need to put value systems in the grooming of people for inclusive discourse that has to be translated into action to achieve real cohesion," she added.

Dr Saber Ahmed Chowdhury from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, presented a case study on Bangladesh, highlighting it as a diverse nation that

requires cohesion and harmony. He pointed out that, despite being a largely homogenous society with 95% of the population speaking Bangla as their national language — which fosters cohesion — their society still faces certain barriers that hinder inclusive development and tolerance. He stated that the Bangladeshi community addressed these challenges through various strategies, such as upholding the rule of law and strengthening democratic institutions.

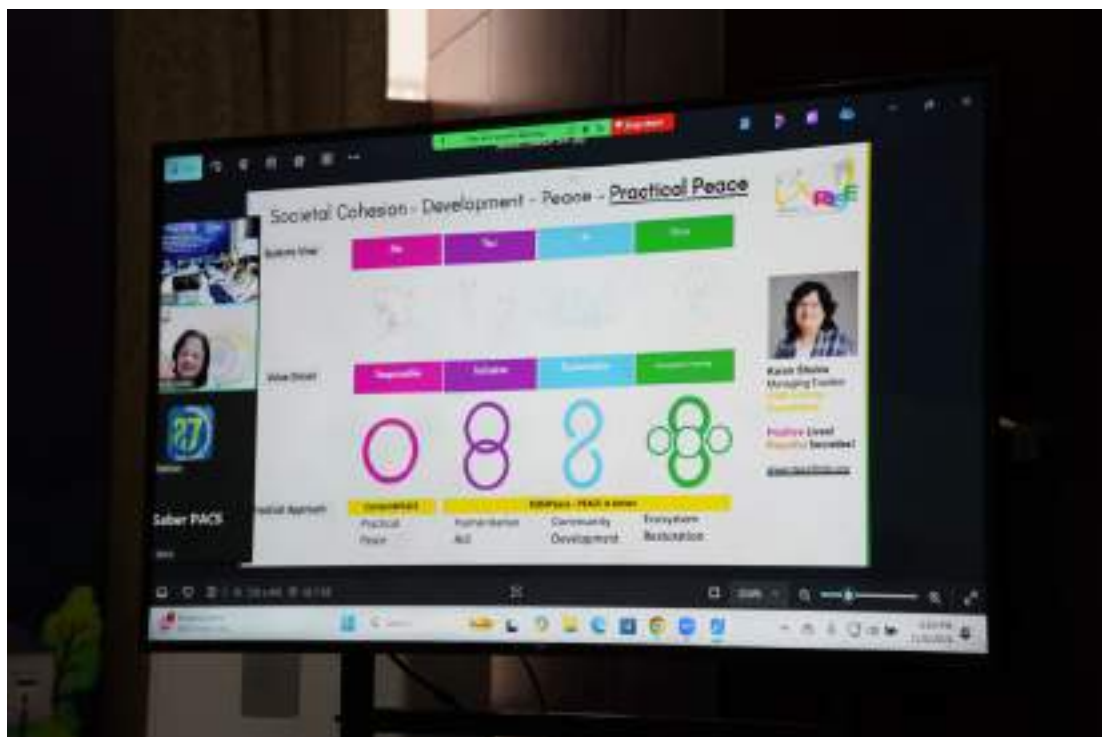


Dr Syed Kaleem Imam, former Federal Secretary said trust, due process, social contract and ethics were necessary for social cohesion, whereas lack of due process and selective process in the system damaged social harmony.

Ms Asma Shirazi, senior journalist and anchor person, said the system had been destroyed aggressively that demanded abrupt measures to reclaim it. "The entire war is of economics that had shattered our social cohesion and good economy will only bring good ethics and societal development," she said.



Mr Dushyanth Weeraman from Sri Lanka proposed that the South Asian countries needed broadening of its belief systems that can help achieve social cohesion.



Ms Farwa Zafar from Karim Khan Afridi Welfare Foundation (KKAWF) addressed the component of violence against women and said that this phenomenon undermines social cohesion and economic progress and costs globally \$4.4 trillion. "Societies thrive on harmonious relationships," she added.

She highlighted that in Pakistan in 2023, thousands of cases of violence against women were officially registered, while countless other

incidents went unreported and unpunished. These acts of discrimination and violence contribute to societal unrest and inequality. Ms Zafar emphasised the need

empathy, and respect. Programmes in schools and universities should encourage youth participation in community-building efforts.



to address this widespread and silent epidemic being faced by the society.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Educational institutions, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and religious leaders should collaborate to foster respect for diversity through community programmes and educational initiatives that stress inclusivity and mutual understanding.
2. Government bodies and judicial institutions should ensure that the Constitution is upheld as the guiding framework for societal cohesion. Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) must protect citizens' rights and ensure fair treatment under the law to promote inclusivity and equal justice.
3. The Ministry of Education, youth organisations, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should lead initiatives to educate youth on tolerance,
4. Local government and community development organisations should organise regular community events and dialogues to bring people from diverse backgrounds together, helping to build connections and reduce social divides.
5. The government, including Parliament and Local Councils, should work to strengthen fair governance and accountability.
6. Police departments can implement community policing programmes to build positive relationships and maintain respect within communities.
7. Economic development agencies and private sector partners should collaborate to create fair economic opportunities.
8. Humanitarian organisations, government aid agencies, and local NGOs should increase support for peace-building and humanitarian aid in conflict-affected regions, working to foster resilience, unity, and tolerance within communities.



Plenary 3.1:

Towards Economic Empowerment: Women's Financial Inclusion in Pakistan

Moderator: Dr Fareeha Armughan, Research Fellow & Lead-Center of Evidence Action, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Co-Moderator: Mr Frank Schneider, Senior Policy Advisor, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Pakistan

Scene Setting Presentation: Ms Johanna Knoess, Head Adaptive Social Protection Project, GIZ-Pakistan

Chief Guest: Mr Amer Ali Ahmad, Secretary, Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Government of Pakistan

Keynote Speaker: Ms Helene Paust, Deputy Head, Development Cooperation, Embassy of Germany

Speakers:

1. Ms Roshaneh Zafar, Founder and Managing Director, Kashf Foundation, Lahore (Online)
2. Mr Saleem Ullah, Deputy Governor, State Bank of Pakistan
3. Mr Murtaza Ali, President, Jazz Cash
4. Mr Ali Shehzad, Chief Executive Officer, Punjab Social Protection Authority (PSPA), Government of Pakistan

Closing Remarks: Ms Maria Poddey, Country Director, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Pakistan

Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Launch: Center of Adaptive Social Protection & Economic Empowerment (CASPEE)

Plenary Organisers: Dr Fareeha Armughan, Ms Anam Tariq Awan & Ms Umaima Ahmed, SDPI | Ms Johanna Knoess & Mr Frank Schneider, GIZ-Pakistan

Rapporteurs: Mr Tahir Zaman & Ms Umaima Ahmed

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NST7FAU49aE>



NARRATIVE REPORT

During a plenary discussion titled 'Towards Economic Empowerment: Women's Financial Inclusion in Pakistan', speakers agreed that empowerment and financial access are inseparable. They highlighted the critical role of financial inclusion in empowering women, emphasising its potential to foster both social and economic progress.

The plenary was moderated by **Dr Fareeha Armughan**, Research Fellow & Lead-Center of Evidence Action, SDPI and **Mr Frank Schneider**, Senior Policy Advisor, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Pakistan.

Mr Amer Ali Ahmad Benazir, Secretary, Income Support Programme (BISP) said, "Economic empowerment of society is contingent on the financial inclusion of women." BISP, Pakistan's flagship social safety net programme, is a prime example, serving as a lifeline for many women, particularly those who are heading of their households. "Many women in BISP are recognised





as heads of the family, and it is perhaps their only source of income,” Mr Ahmad said.



Ms Helene Paust, Deputy Head, Development Cooperation, Embassy of Germany, echoed this sentiment, stressing that gender inequality remained a significant barrier when it came to financial autonomy. “The ability of women to make money and spend money is severely restricted due to their dependency on male family members,” Ms Paust said.

Ms Johanna Knoess, Head Adaptive Social Protection Project, GIZ-Pakistan pointed out the positive impact of financial inclusion on poverty reduction and women empowerment, citing a successful case in Kenya, where



194,000 households were lifted out of poverty thanks to financial inclusion. “Financial inclusion helps reduce poverty, improves the economy, and plays a key role in empowering women and girls,” Ms Knoess said.



Ms Roshaneh Zafar, Founder and Managing Director, Kashf Foundation, Lahore gave a presentation on the financial empowerment of women. She said while mobile phone penetration had reached an impressive 80% in Pakistan, their potential was far from being fully realised. “Women are more willing than men to choose

digital financial services, and mobile wallets offer a critical opportunity for Pakistan’s under-banked and unbanked population,” Ms Zafar said. However, the path to full financial inclusion is not without its challenges. Ms Zafar pointed out that financial inclusion could not simply be a matter of access; women must have the agency and support to make use of it effectively.



Mr Saleem Ullah, Deputy Governor, State Bank of Pakistan shed light on the progress made in increasing account ownership in the country, which rose from 16% in 2016 to 64% in 2022, with women’s account ownership reaching over 40%. However, he acknowledged that while account ownership was growing, many customers still lacked access to a full range of financial services, such as credit and investment opportunities. “We took several initiatives, including remote account opening and Asaan mobile accounts, to facilitate access,” he said. Efforts to bridge the gender gap in financial services are ongoing, with SBP introducing the ‘Banking on Equality’ initiative in 2022 to make the financial environment more conducive for women, he added.



Mr Murtaza Ali, President, Jazz Cash stated that digital platforms were the only viable solution to increase female participation in the formal financial system. “Even after opening mobile wallet accounts, women were not using them, so we had to create incentives, like discounts on store purchases to encourage usage,” Mr Ali explained.

Mr Ali Shehzad, Chief Executive Officer, Punjab Social Protection Authority reiterated on the economic importance of investing in women at the regional level. “Investments made in women are the most beneficial in the long run, both socially and economically,” Mr Shehzad said. Under his authority are run several programmes aimed at supporting women, including financial literacy and marketable skills training for young married couples.



The forum concluded with a call for a more inclusive ecosystem that supports women empowerment, urging that the participation of all family members — especially

husbands and mothers-in-law — be considered to create a more supportive environment for women.



Ms Maria Poddey, Country Director, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Pakistan gave the closing remarks and shed light on the new initiative called Center of Adaptive Social Protection and Economic Empowerment (CASPEE), which would

further the objectives of women empowerment and financial inclusion.

Dr Abid Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI concluded the session by saying that the learning from discussion should be included in the curriculum taught to civil servants to truly sensitise the society and make a collective effort to strengthen women empowerment.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government agencies, financial institutions, and non-profit organisations should develop comprehensive Financial Literacy Programmes, especially for women in rural and underserved areas, focusing on foundational financial skills.
2. Digital payment providers and social protection programmes like the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) should provide Digital Financial Literacy (DFL) training to increase comfort with digital transactions among women, beneficiaries, and social protection workers.
3. Government of Pakistan can leverage partnerships, such as Germany's support for social protection programmes, to expand training for women's financial inclusion.
4. Policymakers should develop policies aimed at

closing the gender gap in financial services, ensuring women have equal opportunities to participate in the economy and access financial resources.

5. United Nations agencies and local initiatives should continue collaborations to enhance digital and financial access for women, particularly within existing social protection frameworks.
6. Digital payment platforms (e.g., Easypaisa, JazzCash) should work with financial literacy programmes to encourage women's adoption of digital transactions, promoting greater financial independence.
7. Social protection agencies should train workers on the importance of financial literacy, equipping them to educate women beneficiaries and fostering a support network for financial empowerment.
8. Education sector and community programmes should focus on improving basic literacy among women as a prerequisite for effective financial and digital inclusion.
9. Government bodies should launch programmes aimed specifically at empowering women with financial skills, starting with foundational financial education before technical skills training.
10. Community leaders and advocacy groups should encourage male involvement and support for women's financial empowerment to foster a more inclusive environment, addressing cultural norms that affect women's financial access.
11. Banks and financial institutions should design products tailored to women's needs, such as low-cost digital wallets and microloans that allow financial independence and cater to low-income households.
12. Financial service providers and regulatory bodies should work to reduce transaction fees for digital wallets and other digital services, making them more accessible and affordable for women.
13. Financial literacy programmes and entrepreneurial organisations should offer training in financial education, business development, gender justice, and health-related issues, empowering women entrepreneurs holistically.



Plenary 3.2:

Advancing Sustainable Agriculture: Innovations, Collaborations and Community Impact

Moderator: Ms Zainab Naeem, Associate Research Fellow, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Opening Remarks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Chief Guest: Mr Rana Tanveer Hussain, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Government of Pakistan

Distinguished Panellists:

1. Ms Khalida Bashir, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC), Government of Pakistan
2. Dr Adil Najam, Professor and Dean Emeritus, Boston University, USA
3. Mr Malik Amin Aslam, Former Minister of State for Environment, Government of Pakistan
4. Mr Haseeb Malik, Director Supply Chain, PepsiCo Pakistan

Plenary Organisers: Ms Zainab Naeem, SDPI | Mr Basit Pirzada, PepsiCo Pakistan

Rapporteurs: Mr Ibraheem Khan & Mr Nazar Muhammad

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bn34xRnBDog>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Tech-led innovation, conservation crucial to achieve climate-resilient agriculture in Pakistan: Rana Tanveer

Mr Rana Tanveer Hussain, Ministry of National Food Security and Research said the country was bracing galloping impacts of climate change taking a heavy toll on its agriculture sector that demanded technology-led

innovation and conservation crucial to achieve climate-resilient agriculture in Pakistan.

He highlighted that the agriculture sector, contributing 25% of Pakistan's GDP, is the backbone of the economy but is under significant threat due to climate vulnerability. Pakistan ranks among the top five most climate-vulnerable countries, making innovation and conservation crucial to ensure food security for future



generations. “Our task is to reimagine agriculture for resilience. Water conservation and the use of cutting-edge technologies are vital,” **Mr Hussain** stated.

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director of SDPI in his opening remarks noted that Pakistan remains resilient despite various regional and environmental pressures.



Emphasizing on the conference’s focus on fostering climate resilience through technology, such as climate-smart agriculture, drones, and soil-detection technologies, he stated that sustainable development hinges on effective public-private partnerships. “It’s time to engage the private sector as part of the solution,” Dr Suleri added, stressing the importance of empowering communities and farmers through innovation and strategic alliances.

Dr Adil Najam, Professor and Dean Emeritus, Boston University highlighted that Pakistan’s agricultural productivity is at risk, citing a 2015 LUMS study showing an 8-10% drop in productivity for staple crops like wheat and rice due to climate change. He argued for local

adaptation rather than dependence on global solutions like AI and digital technologies, which often fail to address Pakistan’s immediate needs. “Climate change is a present risk that we must adapt to, regardless of our low carbon footprint,” **Dr Najam** stressed, pointing to the need for large-scale solutions backed by powerful actors.



Mr Malik Amin Aslam, former Minister of State for Environment called Pakistan “a nation born out of resilience”. He reminded the audience of Pakistan’s history of overcoming adversity, from migration crises to earthquakes and wars. He outlined that agriculture,



the country’s largest employer, especially for women, is directly affected by changing temperatures and rainfall. “Climate resilience starts with agriculture resilience,” he said, advocating for climate-smart techniques, better water conservation, and the adoption of new seed technology to match evolving weather patterns.

Mr Haseeb Malik, Director Supply Chain, PepsiCo Pakistan shared initiatives aimed at biodiversity conservation in the company’s cultivated lands, noting



that improved soil health could boost agricultural exports.

Ms Khalida Bashir, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Climate



Change and Environmental Coordination discussed the challenge of securing climate finance, with Pakistan often dependent on loans rather than grants. She called for greater engagement with the private sector to pitch and implement innovative and sustainable projects.

The plenary concluded with a collective commitment to harness innovation, expand partnerships, and empower communities to safeguard Pakistan's agricultural resilience against a backdrop of escalating climate challenges. Speakers underscored the urgent need for public-private collaboration to build resilience in Pakistan's agriculture sector, which faces mounting challenges from climate change, water scarcity, and outdated farming practices.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



1. The government should prioritise agricultural resilience by adopting a Climate Smart Agriculture System that prepares Pakistan's farming sector for climate challenges.
2. Development partners, local and provincial governments ought to establish rainwater collection systems and water conservation initiatives, ensuring sustainable water resources to support agriculture amidst climate change.
3. Public funding bodies need to allocate resources to initiatives focused on Climate Smart Agriculture, enabling sustainable practices that improve productivity and resilience.
4. Agricultural research institutions and tech companies should collaborate on deploying drone technology to assess soil quality and conditions, offering data-driven insights to farmers.
5. The state should empower the farming community through training, subsidies, and support programmes. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) should be promoted to increase access to resources and expertise.
6. Research institutions and relevant government departments should work together to develop and promote climate-resilient crop varieties, equipping farmers with crops better suited to changing conditions.
7. Meteorological institutions and agricultural bodies need to establish systems that provide farmers with timely weather updates, helping them plan and protect their crops effectively.
8. Pakistan should pursue partnerships with relevant international companies to supply farmers with climate-resilient seeds, promoting adaptability in agriculture.
9. The government should provide subsidies on sustainable agricultural products and resources to reduce costs for farmers and encourage eco-friendly practices, supporting long-term resilience in the agricultural sector.

Thematic Session C-1: (High-Level Policy Dialogue) Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) as an Opportunity for Industrial Decarbonisation in Pakistan

Moderator: Ms Saleha Qureshi, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Welcome Remarks: Ms Sobiah Becker, GIZ Pakistan

Keynote Speaker: Ms Maria Poddey, GIZ Pakistan

Chair: Mr Zulfiqar Younas, Additional Secretary, MoCC&EC, GoP

Distinguished Panellists:

1. Dr Sardar Mohazzam, MD, NEECA
2. Mr Muhammad Abdul Aleem, CE/Secretary General, OICCI
3. Mr Fauz ul Azeem, Interloop Limited
4. Mr Abu Bakar Ismail, Head of Energy and Sustainability, Amreli Steels
5. Dr Nabeel Amin, Head Compliances, MoCom, GoP

Vote of Thanks: Dr Khalid Waleed, SDPI

Panel Organisers: Ms Saleha Qureshi & Dr Khalid Waleed, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Sania Panezai & Mr Muhammad Umer

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbKrs6idhTQ>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Key stakeholders from across the country's public and private sectors addressed the transformative potential of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) for industrial decarbonisation at the session on 'Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) as an Opportunity for Industrial Decarbonisation

in Pakistan'. The session spotlighted how CBAM could propel Pakistan's industries onto the global stage, enhancing export competitiveness and setting a precedent for sustainable practices. Panellists highlighted that while the private sector plays a transformative role, collaborative efforts with the government and international partners like GIZ are critical to realizing a resilient, low-carbon future.



The session, chaired by Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, **Mr Zulfiqar Younas**, centred around the country's ambitious plans to engage in COP29 climate discussions as a unified voice within G77.

Mr Younas announced Pakistan's Climate Finance Forum to be held on 12 November 2024, positioning Pakistan at the forefront of climate finance advocacy for developing nations. "Pakistan is committed to representing the needs of the Global South at COP29, advocating for equitable access to climate finance that reflects the challenges and goals of developing countries," **Mr Younas** stated.

This forum will bring together key stakeholders to explore funding solutions that support Pakistan's climate resilience and sustainable development agenda. Building on these plans, **Mr Younas** shared that Pakistan would present 8 to 10 bankable carbon projects at COP29. Designed to appeal to both compliance and voluntary carbon markets (VCMs), these projects represent investment opportunities across crucial sectors, with a focus on fostering private sector engagement in climate-aligned initiatives.

Mr Younas also introduced a national climate dashboard that the ministry is developing, a pioneering digital platform aimed at ensuring transparency in climate finance. "The climate dashboard is an essential tool for accountability, allowing us to track climate finance inflows and project impacts with full transparency. It builds trust, particularly for investors looking to support Pakistan's climate goals," he emphasised.

Adviser for the Pak-German Climate and Energy Partnership at GIZ Islamabad, **Ms Sobiah Becker** highlighted Germany's steadfast commitment to Pakistan's sustainable transition, with over €500 million invested in clean energy and modernisation projects. "This partnership is about building resilience and ensuring that Pakistan's key sectors are ready for a climate-conscious global market," she noted.



In her keynote address, Country Director of GIZ Pakistan, **Ms Maria Poddey** emphasised the urgency of aligning Pakistan's industrial practices with global decarbonisation standards. "The textile sector, central to Pakistan's exports, must adopt sustainability measures to remain competitive in global markets," she stressed, reaffirming GIZ's support

to help Pakistan navigate this transition.

Managing Director of the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEECA), **Dr Sardar Mohazzam**, presented green hydrogen as a pivotal component in Pakistan's pathway to industrial decarbonisation. "The future is green hydrogen," he said, detailing NEECA's work on establishing hydrogen as a viable alternative for heavy industries like steel, cement, and textiles.

Dr Mohazzam stressed that as global economies adopt low-carbon technologies, Pakistan had a unique opportunity to leverage green hydrogen, which could transform energy-intensive sectors and lower the nation's carbon footprint. He outlined NEECA's ongoing feasibility studies, focused on scaling green hydrogen production, reducing costs and integrating hydrogen into the energy mix to power industrial processes sustainably. "By investing in green hydrogen, Pakistan can establish itself as a leader in clean energy solutions and secure a competitive edge in global markets increasingly defined by sustainable practices," **Dr Mohazzam** noted.



CEO/Secretary General of the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI), **Mr Muhammad Abdul Aleem**, underscored the critical role of Pakistan's private sector in bridging the estimated \$152 billion climate financing gap. He advocated for



a regulatory environment that encourages green investments and supports Pakistan's commitment to sustainable growth.

Dr Nabeel Amin, Head of Compliances at the Ministry of Commerce, outlined capacity-building initiatives to ensure Pakistan's major export industries were



prepared for C B A M compliance, particularly the textile sector. "Our goal is to future-proof Pakistan's industries, enabling them to withstand g l o b a l regulatory

changes and remain competitive," Dr Amin added.

Mr Fauz ul Azeem, GM of Corporate Sustainability and Chemical Management at Interloop Limited, stressed the need for a robust carbon accounting framework to ensure CBAM compliance and stakeholder trust.

Mr Abubakar Ismail, Head of Energy and Sustainability at Amreli Steel, emphasised that CBAM compliance presents a competitive advantage for Pakistan, especially in the EU markets.

Moderated by lead of the Pakistan Industrial Decarbonisation Programme at SDPI, Ms Saleha Qureshi, the panel discussion explored the technical, regulatory and financial strategies essential for aligning Pakistan's industries with global sustainability standards.

Dr Khalid Waleed, Research Fellow at SDPI, extended a vote of thanks, noting that CBAM represents a powerful opportunity for Pakistan to redefine its role in the global economy.

The experts also presented a number of recommendations on implementing regulatory support and incentives, enhancing capacity for carbon reporting and transparency, promoting public-private partnerships for technology transfer, promoting green

hydrogen initiatives for industrial decarbonisation, establishing a national climate finance strategy and fostering development of voluntary carbon markets.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement Regulatory Support and Incentives

- Government regulatory bodies (e.g., Ministry of Climate Change and Ministry of Finance) should facilitate CBAM compliance by offering regulatory support and financial incentives, such as tax breaks, subsidies, or low-interest loans, to industries investing in renewable energy.
- Environmental Protection Agencies (EPAs) should provide regulatory guidance on carbon management and reporting practices, especially for export-heavy sectors like textiles and steel.

2. Enhance Capacity for Carbon Reporting and Transparency

- Industry associations and Chambers of



Commerce should build capacity among industries to report carbon emissions transparently.

- Training institutes and vocational bodies should develop training programmes for Tier 1 manufacturers on accurate carbon accounting and management practices.
- The Ministry of Commerce should create an official carbon reporting framework aligned with CBAM to ensure transparency across supply chains.

3. Promote Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for Technology Transfer

- The Ministry of Industries and Production should spearhead PPPs to facilitate the adoption of sustainable technologies.
- International organisations like the United Nations and World Bank should collaborate with the government to provide technical support and facilitate technology transfer to Pakistani industries.

4. Promote Green Hydrogen Initiatives for Industrial Decarbonisation

- The Ministry of Energy should establish a national strategy for integrating green hydrogen into the energy mix, particularly targeting high-emission sectors such as steel, cement and textiles.

- Research institutes and international partners should be engaged to conduct feasibility studies and pilot projects for green hydrogen applications.
- 5. Establish a National Climate Finance Strategy**
 - The Ministry of Finance and State Bank of Pakistan should develop a national climate finance strategy to attract international funding and close the adaptation financing gap.
 - Climate finance task forces should be set up to coordinate funding opportunities, utilising digital dashboards for transparent tracking of fund allocation.
 - International donors and private investors should be engaged to support Pakistan's decarbonisation goals.
 - 6. Foster Development of Voluntary Carbon Markets (VCMs)**
 - Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) should establish a regulatory framework for VCMs, enabling industries to trade carbon credits.
 - Private sector stakeholders should be encouraged to participate in carbon trading to offset emissions and promote sustainability.
 - 7. Integrate CBAM Compliance within National Energy Policies**
 - The Ministry of Energy and Power should integrate CBAM compliance into national energy policies by setting clear targets for renewable energy adoption in energy-intensive sectors.
 - Provincial energy departments should support investments in solar, wind, and hydrogen energy solutions, providing subsidies or incentives for on-site renewable energy generation.
 - 8. Strengthen Export Compliance Support for Key Industries**
 - The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) should develop sector-specific compliance programmes to help exporters meet CBAM requirements.
 - Export facilitation centres should be set up to assist exporters in obtaining necessary certifications and documentation for EU markets.
 - 9. Support SMEs in the Transition to Low-Carbon Practices**
 - Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) and industry chambers should support SMEs in adopting low-carbon technologies and carbon accounting practices.
 - Government grant programmes should be established to fund SME capacity-building and technology adoption.
 - 10. Address Policy Gaps and Build SME Capabilities**
 - Policy advisory bodies should conduct thorough analyses to identify gaps in SME support and develop capacity-building initiatives that align with CBAM compliance.
 - 11. Calculate and Plan for Carbon Footprint Reduction**
 - Industry bodies and environmental consultants should encourage industries to calculate their carbon footprints as a foundation for developing decarbonisation plans.
 - 12. Leverage CBAM for Export Growth in Key Sectors**
 - The Ministry of Commerce and industry stakeholders should design strategies to enhance steel production and other high-potential sectors, leveraging CBAM compliance to boost exports.
 - 13. Develop a Comprehensive Decarbonisation Strategy**
 - A cross-ministerial task force should be established to design a comprehensive national decarbonisation strategy, ensuring alignment across sectors and continuous monitoring.



Thematic Session C-2: (Roundtable)

Collaborative Philanthropy in Pakistan with a Gender Lens

Moderator: Mr Tristan Ace, CEO, AVPN

Co-Moderator: Ms Deborah Foo, AVPN

Panellists:

1. Ms Seema Aziz, CARE Foundation
2. Ms Shaheen Atiq-ur-Rahman, Bunyad Foundation
3. Ms Neha Nazir, Rabia Trust Hospital
4. Mr Shakeel Ahmed, Telenor Pakistan
5. Ms Aimen Bajwa, PepsiCo Pakistan
6. Mr Fatima Arshad, Unilever Pakistan
7. Ms Kehkshan Jibran, PMS
8. Ms Amna Kausar, Kashf Foundation
9. Ms Nadia Shah, SRSP
10. Mr Fahd Zulfiqar, PIDE
11. Ms Sara Munir, i2i Ventures
12. Mr Saif ul Qahhar, Kay & EMMS Pvt Ltd
13. Dr Naushin Mahmood, PCP
14. Ms Gull Zaiba Jawad, Red Marker Systems
15. Mr Javed Hussain, SCF
16. Ms Farwa Zafar, KKAWF
17. Mr Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Lucky Cement Limited

Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Panel Organisers: Engr. Ahad Nazir, Mr Abdullah Khalid, Ms Maheen Rehan & Mr Hammad Nadir, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Maheen Rehan & Ms Ramlah Javed

NARRATIVE REPORT

Experts called for a shift towards strategic philanthropy in Pakistan, emphasising the need to align funding with local needs, promote financial literacy for women in rural areas, and foster collaboration across sectors. Highlighting Pakistan's strong charitable tradition, the experts participating in the roundtable '**Collaborative Philanthropy in Pakistan with a Gender Lens**' urged data-driven approaches to tackle issues such



as gender inequality, climate adaptation and skill development, aiming for sustainable and inclusive growth. The experts advocated smarter financial models and greater cooperation with the government and private sectors to uplift vulnerable communities and address the country's pressing development challenges.



CEO of the Asian Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN), **Mr Tristan Ace** noted, that Pakistan was one of Asia's newer markets for us. "We are seeing a shift towards more strategic philanthropic approaches, with a growing focus on collaboration to address pressing social issues," **Mr Ace** said. He highlighted that in an increasingly multi-polar world, strategic philanthropy was critical, especially as nations grapple with climate

adaptation and persistent social inequalities. He said we must invest in long-term solutions and work closely with governments to tackle entrenched problems.

Care Foundation Chairperson, **Ms Seema Aziz**, stressed that literacy alone was insufficient and education must



now be seen as a societal equaliser. She advocated for a minimum of 12 years of education for all Pakistani children, with a focus on the underprivileged. **Ms Aziz** emphasised that despite significant financial resources in Pakistan, literacy rates remained dismal. "We must spend funds based on community needs, as this yields the best results," she added.



Ms Shaheen Atiq-ur-Rehman, founder of the Bunyad Foundation, drew attention to Pakistan's illiteracy rates, noting that the nation leads globally in terms of the number of illiterate individuals. "Pakistan is not just Islamabad; conditions in rural areas are far worse,"

she lamented. **Ms Attique** highlighted the success of informal education models, like those in Bangladesh, and discussed Bunyad's efforts to establish non-formal schools for older students, especially girls. Addressing issues of malnutrition, gender disparities and social attitudes, she also pointed out that financial incentives could help gain community support for initiatives. "Gender roles can shift when financial benefits are visible," she noted, emphasising the need to change mindsets in rural regions.



CEO of Rabia Trust Hospital, **Ms Neha Nazir**, described her organisation's work in rural areas, including screenings for HIV and hepatitis in partnership with public hospitals. "Collaboration with government and community agencies is essential for building resilience

in health care," she added.

Four discussion groups were formed at the event to develop recommendations.

Ms Amna Kausar representing Kashf Foundation noted that a consolidated data platform and targeted interventions were essential to close Pakistan's



development gaps. She highlighted Pakistan's potential in philanthropy but warned of disjointed development efforts due to bureaucratic hurdles and corruption. "Transformational change is urgent, along with data consolidation to guide targeted interventions," she added.

Ms Kehkshan Jibran emphasised the need for strategic philanthropy and advocated for a national platform to coordinate multi-sectoral efforts, prioritise gender diversity and provide transparent data. "Intelligent decisions require accessible data," **Ms Jibran** noted, adding, "Sustainable models should consider social, economic, and environmental factors".

Ms Aimen Bajwa of PepsiCo Pakistan stressed the need for financial inclusion and skill development for women, especially in rural areas. "Financial literacy and a blend

of funding models are essential," she said, adding, "Sustainability in projects and gender-specific funds are crucial to support women's market participation".

Executive Director, SDPI, in his concluding remarks, addressed the gender gap in Pakistan, and reiterated the importance of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG-5) on gender equality. "We need a multidisciplinary approach to achieve poverty alleviation and food security at the household level," he added.

The various experts from different sectors at the forum called for a strategic, collaborative approach to philanthropy in Pakistan, advocating for targeted, data-driven and gender-sensitive solutions to promote sustainable social change.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government agencies, non-profits, and philanthropic organisations should establish a collaborative framework to promote partnerships focused on transparency and anti-corruption. This would ensure that resources are effectively utilised and impact is maximised across sectors.
2. Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives, in collaboration with funding agencies, should develop a data-driven system to ensure equitable distribution of resources, especially for underrepresented causes like women's initiatives. This will help channel funds to areas where they are most needed.
3. Technology firms and research institutions should collaborate to build a centralised data platform that consolidates information on societal needs, funding patterns, and programme outcomes. This will enable evidence-based decision-making and targeted interventions that promote inclusivity and social impact.
4. Policy reform committees and digital inclusion advocates should work together to develop inclusive policies and platforms that promote

digital access and merit-based opportunities. This multi-stakeholder approach should integrate evidence-based solutions to empower women, especially in underserved areas.

5. The Ministry of Education and Professional Training, donor agencies, and private sector investors should create a centralised body that aligns the visions of various stakeholders. This body would coordinate partnerships and investments in financial literacy and skill development programmes, ensuring resources are directed to where they can promote sustainable economic growth.
6. Financial institutions and philanthropic organisations should move beyond traditional philanthropy by establishing gender bonds focused on socio-capital empowerment. These funding mechanisms should prioritise investments in women's health, education, and economic participation, building sustainable support systems across sectors.
7. Community organisations and health advocacy groups should lead sensitisation campaigns to raise awareness about women's health issues. This includes working with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to direct investments toward empowering women and fostering gender inclusivity.



Thematic Session C-3:

Minamata Convention Compliance in Pakistan: Role of Dermatologists and Regulatory Authorities

Moderator: Dr Razia Safdar, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Chair: Dr Zaigham Abbas, Director Lab/NEQS, PEPA

Guest of Honour: Dr Shazia Sobia Aslam Soomro, Former MNA, GoP (Online)

Special Remarks: Dr Farzana Altaf, Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency

Speakers:

1. Mr Khawja Gulam Mohiuddin, PSQCA (Online)
2. Brig. Dr Naeem Raza, PAD
3. Prof. Dr Nadia Ali Azfar, AIMC, Lahore (Online)
4. Dr Tahira Shahid, Kaya Wellness Retreat, Islamabad
5. Dr Sadia Tabassum, AKUH, Karachi (Online)
6. Dr Iqra Sharafat, Assistant Director, PSQCA

Panel Organisers: Dr Razia Safdar & Ms Amina Ehsan Qazi, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Khadija Hasan & Dr Tayyaba Masood

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bzb-IS8ZJ5w>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Rampant use of non-compliant cosmetics in the absence of appropriate legislation, lack of awareness and quality infrastructure were not only raising grave health and environmental concerns, but also were a cause of embarrassment for the country at the international fora. This was the gist of a thematic session on 'Minamata Convention Compliance in Pakistan: Role of Dermatologists and Regulatory Authorities'. Experts observed that an array of skin lightening products being used in Pakistan had a high concentration of mercury, posing a grave risk to human health and environment.

They said mercury poisoning refers to toxicity caused by mercury consumption. The symptoms depend on

the type, dose, method, and duration of exposure. These symptoms include muscle weakness, poor coordination, numbness in the hands and feet, skin rashes, anxiety, memory problems, and difficulties with speaking, hearing, and seeing. Environmental experts, industrialists and policymakers mutually agreed that controlling sources of mercury pollution or emissions and educating the public about its grave impacts could effectively help minimise the toxic chemical's exposure to human health and environment. The speakers said in South Asia, skin-whitening creams feed on the region's obsession with fairness, which mostly stems from the shared histories of invasion and colonisation, and the ongoing global trend of white supremacy.

Dr Razia Safdar from SDPI said Pakistan was part and signatory of Minamata Convention 2020 since March

2021, which prohibited the manufacture, import and export of cosmetics with mercury concentration over 1PPM. She said cosmetic industry contributed 55% mercury to the environment that needed to be regulated. She further said every year as much as 9,000 tonnes of mercury was released into the atmosphere, water and land. The largest source of mercury emission is artisanal and small-scale gold mining, Dr Razia Safdar said, adding that everyone is exposed to some amount of mercury but a high amount can lead to long-term and sometime permanent neurological damages.

Dr Zaigham Abbas

said Pakistan had already eliminated mercury use in four industries, but it was now necessary to address its use in the health sector as well. He said the seriousness of the issue could be gauged from the fact that out of 59 samples of skin whitening creams which were tested, only three were found to be complying with regulations and had mercury lower than 1PPM.



Mr Khawja Gulam Mohiuddin, Assistant Director/ Incharge (Chemical Division) – PSQCA said the country lacked standard labs for testing contaminated cosmetics. He said the PSQCA would have taken action if factories were not following rules and would have even sealed them. It was also revealed that there was no legislation to regulate online platform involved in the sale of such cosmetics.

Brig Dr Naeem Raza from Pakistan Association of Dermatologists (PAD) said the use of cosmetics with excessive mercury was rampant, and the reason behind its excessive use was non-implementation of law. He said no concerted efforts were taken in this regard.



Prof Dr Nadia Ali Azfar from AIMC Lahore said online platforms were equally involved and some mechanism needed to be put in place for its control. She also proposed that market practice should be changed.



Dr Tahira Shahid from the Kaya Wellness Retreat said change of attitude was required to overcome this threat.

Dr Sadia Tabassum from AKUH, Karachi, explained the concept of colourism, describing it as discrimination based on skin tone, often occurring within the same ethnic or racial groups. She noted that while colourism differs slightly from racism, it stems from similar roots. It originates from colonial influences that introduced a class structure with historical narratives equating fair skin with power, privilege, and status.

Dr Iqra Sharafat, Assistant Director at PSQCA, highlighted the challenges faced by the organisation. The first challenge is the unregulated informal market across the country, which lacks the facilities and digital systems needed for effective tracking and monitoring. The second challenge is the high demand for cheaper products, driven by consumers who are often uneducated and have limited purchasing power, making them inclined towards low-cost options. She added that PSQCA could organise training sessions to raise awareness among manufacturers.



Director General of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (PEPA), **Dr Farzana Altaf**, said that strong legislation was needed to control the use of mercury in cosmetics, as it is causing serious health issues such as impaired mental development and stunted growth. She said scientific-based research and policy decisions were needed and coordination among institutions and stakeholders should be improved. She also recommended that even 1PPM should not be allowed to control mercury use in cosmetics.

Dr Shazia Sobia Aslam Soomro, former MNA, GoP, commended the SDPI team for addressing this sensitive issue and stated that she would present the findings of the session to the health and climate change standing committees. She noted that while social media has raised awareness, many people continue to use harmful whitening creams. She emphasised the need for teamwork and underscored the importance of addressing this issue at the local level

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Parliamentarians and policy advocates should bring the issue to the legislative floor to draft laws that

- enforce compliance with the Minamata Convention.
2. Medical associations and dermatology societies should conduct educational programmes to inform prescribers about checking product content and mercury levels before prescribing.
3. Ministry of Health and public health organisations should initiate awareness campaigns in both English and Urdu as well as regional languages to educate the public on the dangers of mercury-containing products, particularly focusing on vulnerable communities with low buying power.
4. Academic institutions and research bodies should collaborate to conduct research on the impacts of mercury in products. Engage social media influencers and digital platforms to spread awareness about safe product usage.
5. Psychologists, public health experts, and community health workers should be involved in addressing societal pressures that drive the use of harmful skin-whitening products.
6. Pharmaceutical associations and medical training institutes should organise seminars and workshops to educate all healthcare professionals, including dermatologists, about mercury hazards.
7. Regulatory authorities, such as DRAP (Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan), should enforce bans on mercury-containing products and the pharmaceutical companies that produce them.
8. Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), in collaboration with consumer protection agencies, should regulate online marketing practices,

- particularly restricting ads that promote harmful skin-whitening products.
9. Lawmakers and regulatory bodies need to develop legislation to bring informal markets under regulation, ensuring compliance with the Minamata Convention.
10. Chambers of Commerce and industrial associations should educate local manufacturers on producing mercury-free products and promoting safe alternatives.
11. The Ministry of Commerce and regulatory authorities should establish systems for tracking and monitoring the sale of mercury-containing products in the market.
12. Health inspectors and environmental agencies should conduct regular surveys of skin-whitening products, sampling them to check for mercury content and enforce standards.
13. Regulatory bodies, in partnership with stakeholders and industry experts, should develop stringent standards for all products containing mercury.
14. Tech companies and health ministries should introduce digital tools to enhance tracking, reporting, and compliance with mercury regulations.
15. Government research labs and private sector labs should be equipped to conduct standardised testing of products for mercury content.
16. Media regulatory bodies and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should run campaigns to control misleading narratives and promote public health information.



Thematic Session C-4: (Podium Discussion)

Beyond Fake News: Finding Truth in a World of Misinformation

Moderator: Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Speakers:

1. Mr Mazhar Abbas, Senior Journalist & Former President PFUJ
2. Ms Zebunnisa Burki, The News International, Karachi
3. Mr Asad Baig, MMfD
4. Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, SDPI

Panel Organisers: Mr Wasif Naqvi & Mr Asim Sherazi, SDPI

Rapporteur: Mr Ibraheem Khan

Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uaTkB_sY2GE



NARRATIVE REPORT

Speakers at the podium discussion on 'Beyond Fake News: Finding Truth in a World of Misinformation' highlighted the need for a multi-pronged approach to combat fake news with a greater responsibility from journalists and media outlets, enhanced media literacy for consumers, and the development of technological solutions to verify information, whereas the panellists agreed that while the challenge of fake news was formidable, truth and credible journalism would ultimately prevail. The increasing prevalence of fake news and its damaging impact on society was the central theme of a thought-provoking podium discussion.

Moderated by **Dr Shafqat Munir**, Deputy Executive Director, SDPI featured leading experts from various

media sectors who discussed how fake news was undermining trust in journalism and suggested potential solutions for combating misinformation in the digital age.

The esteemed panel of speakers included senior journalists and former president of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) **Mr Mazhar Abbas**; **Ms Zebunnisa Burki** from The News International, SDPI Executive Director **Dr Abid Suleri** and founder of Media Lab **Mr Asad Baig**.

Dr Abid Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI in his opening remarks, emphasised the need for data-driven decision-making in addressing the spread of fake news. He pointed out that policy makers often react to public pressure when managing information, leading

to hastily made decisions. "Data-based approaches are essential to navigate this complex issue. Both journalists and researchers share a parallel role in gathering information without bias," he stated.

Dr Suleri also raised concerns about the regulation of media, noting that over-regulation could stifle free expression, while under-regulation could allow misinformation to spread unchecked.



Mr Mazhar Abbas outlined the severe impact of fake news on public trust in the media, especially in a society increasingly polarised by political and social divides. "Fake news has created widespread distrust towards media. In earlier times, print media had built-in checks and balances, with multiple layers of editors reviewing content. Today, the line between news and opinion has blurred, and media is often seen as amplifying personal viewpoints, which is a disservice to the audience," he lamented. Further, he pointed out the challenge of countering the vast reach of fake content. He stressed that while social media played a pivotal role in spreading misinformation, banning news outright would only fuel propaganda.

"The solution lies not in censorship, but in creating media complaints commission with a majority of civil society representatives to ensure greater accountability," proposed **Mr Mazhar Abbas**. He also emphasised the need for three-tier source verification for sensitive news and argued that media outlets should focus on accuracy over sensationalism to regain public trust.



Ms Zebunnisa Burki shared her views on how mainstream media could contribute to the spread of misinformation, citing the controversial Lahore alleged rape case as a key example where media failed to dig into the facts.



"In many cases, liberal media has failed to filter out misinformation, allowing conspiracy theories to thrive. Journalists must be introspective and accountable, ensuring that their content does not fuel disinformation," she emphasised.

Ms Burki also highlighted the importance of media literacy, especially among younger generations. "In countries like Finland and Sri Lanka, children are taught how to spot fake news as early as age 10. We need to do the same in Pakistan to build a more informed society," she added.

Mr Asad Baig took a unique perspective, focusing on the economic drivers behind misinformation. He noted that the monetisation model of social media platforms, which prioritised engagement and reach, inadvertently promoted fake news. "Platforms like Facebook and TikTok have algorithms that amplify hate-driven content, which leads to more engagement and, consequently, greater ad revenue," **Mr Baig** explained. He likened misinformation to a virus that spreads through society, suggesting that, just like public health campaigns against viruses, society needs "herd immunity" against disinformation. He proposed leveraging technologies like blockchain to verify information at the consumer level and argued that "consumer-end solutions" were key to tackling the problem.



During the question-hour session, the speakers called for greater media literacy and more responsible journalism. It was suggested that journalists need to undergo continuous training to adapt to the evolving landscape of digital media. **Mr Asad Baig** agreed, emphasising that AI and automation would play an increasing role in the next decade, and journalists must embrace these technologies empathetically while understanding their potential for good and harm. **Mr Mazhar Abbas** also urged media organisations to make better use of existing mechanisms like the Information Commission, which remained underutilised despite its

potential for ensuring accountability in media practices.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a structured framework for journalists and content creators to verify the authenticity of information before publishing. This can include utilising digital tools like reverse image searches, fact-checking websites, and metadata analysis; leveraging Artificial Intelligence to detect deepfakes, doctored content, or automated bot activity; creating partnerships between news organisations to share verification resources and techniques; and requiring media outlets to disclose their fact-checking processes, including the sources used for verification.
2. Embed media literacy modules into school and university curriculums to teach students how to critically evaluate news sources and recognise biased or misleading content.
3. Emphasise the importance of cross-referencing multiple sources and analysing the credibility of information.
4. Foster skills in identifying logical fallacies, understanding algorithms' influence on social media feeds, and recognising the impact of confirmation bias.
5. Conduct workshops for educators, students, and parents to enhance their understanding of the media landscape and how to navigate misinformation.
6. Encourage student-led fact-checking projects, journalism clubs, or collaborations with local media outlets to promote hands-on learning.
7. Journalists should be required to investigate the root cause and context of a story before publishing, especially in cases involving sensitive or potentially divisive topics.
8. Establish guidelines to prevent the spread of unverified information, particularly on fast-moving digital platforms.
9. Encourage the use of original sources, interviews, and on-ground reporting over reliance on secondary sources.
10. Media organisations should implement strict penalties for journalists who fail to adhere to fact-checking protocols or intentionally publish misleading content.
11. Media houses should regularly train journalists in investigative journalism techniques, source verification, and digital security to protect against manipulation.
12. Any story of a sensitive nature (e.g., health, politics, or conflict) should be verified through at least two to three independent and reliable sources before being published.
13. Reporters should use triangulation methods to confirm the accuracy of information from different sources, reducing the risk of single-source bias.
14. Media organisations should invest in dedicated fact-checking teams to review stories before they go live.
15. Media personnel and organisations should develop and maintain a database of reputable sources with ratings based on historical accuracy, transparency, and neutrality.
16. The government should collaborate with tech companies to address the spread of misinformation without infringing on freedom of speech. This may include enforcing transparency in platform algorithms and content moderation policies; mandating clear labelling of sponsored or politically biased content; allocating funding to support non-profit organisations, libraries, and schools in conducting public awareness campaigns about misinformation; focus on end-user education rather than solely regulating content creators.
17. Consumers should be empowered with tools to recognise fake news.
18. Promote cross-border collaboration on digital safety standards, especially for global platforms like social media.



Thematic Session C-5:

Transforming Food Systems for Climate-Resilient Food Security in Pakistan

Moderator: Ms Khansa Naeem, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Chair: Dr Akmal Siddiq, Technical Advisor, Ministry of National Food Security & Research, GoP

Opening Remarks: Mr Eric Kenefick, WFP

Keynote Speaker: Ms Alessia De Caterina, WFP, Italy

Presentations:

- Mr Tallal Hakeem, APAC - Meeting Increasing Food and Feed Demand Sustainability with Biotechnology
- Mr Muhammad Osama, Namal University, Mianwali - Solar-powered Hydroponic Farming: A Pathway to Sustainable Agriculture

Discussants:

1. Dr Arjan De Haan, IDRC, India- *Financing Needs in Food and Agriculture to Meet Climatic Challenges* (Online)
2. Dr Tariq Mukhtar, PMAS AAUR, Pakistan

Speakers:

1. Ms Florence Rolle, FAO Pakistan – Gender Perspective of Food Systems Transformation
2. Mr Aftab Alam Khan, CEO, RFI

Panel Organisers: Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Ms Rabia Tabassum & Ms Khansa Naeem, SDPI | Ms Emily Vooris, Mr Eric Kenefick & Mr Arshad Jadoon, WFP

Rapporteurs: Ms Anum Fatima & Ms Dua Mobeen

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MSrCHdkzJc>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Scientists, academics and industry experts came together in the panel discussion titled **'Transforming Food Systems for Climate-Resilient Food Security in Pakistan'** spoke on the urgent need to strengthen the country's agricultural infrastructure to withstand the

increasing impacts of climate change.

Mr Eric Kenefick, a representative from the World Food Programme (WFP), opened the discussion with an overall assessment of Pakistan's agricultural sector, which sustains a significant portion of the population. He stressed the importance of building resilience in food

systems to mitigate the effects of climate shocks such as heatwaves and floods, which have been devastating crop yields and livelihoods. "Agriculture sustains and employs so many people in Pakistan, therefore we need to ensure that these food systems are capable to withstand climate shocks and become more resistant," **Mr Kenefick** said.



The focus on climate resilience was echoed by **Ms Alessia De Caterina** from the World Food Programme (WFP) Italy.

In her keynote address, she called for increased investment in food systems and stressed the importance of raising awareness among policymakers about the long-term impacts of climate change on food security. "The first step is to raise awareness at the highest levels of government," she said, adding, "Pakistan already has the framework in place, but what is needed now is the active collaboration of all stakeholders to implement and refine it."

Mr Tallal Hakeem from APAC shared his thoughts on food and feed sustainability. He stressed the importance of not just focusing on food, but on "nutritious food". He also highlighted the negative environmental impacts of the shift towards cash crops in Pakistan, which has led to ecological degradation. These challenges including the focus of farmers on cash crops instead of food crops, along with climate change, must be addressed if we are to secure food systems for the future, he added.

Mr Mohammad Osama from Namal University presented a promising solution in the form of solar-powered hydroponic farming. This soilless agricultural technique allows crops to be grown in nutrient-rich water, reducing the need for land and addressing issues such as water scarcity and soil erosion. "Hydroponics offers improved crop quality, water conservation and climate resilience," **Mr Osama** explained, adding,



"It also has the potential for energy independence by using solar power, reducing reliance on fossil fuels."

Dr Tariq Mukhtar from PMASAAUR in Pakistan discussed the role of biotechnology in creating climate-resilient



rice crops. He spoke on the importance and increasing vulnerability of rice – a staple food for half the world's population, to climate change, which is causing salinity in soil and increasing pest outbreaks.

While technological innovations are critical, experts also pointed to the importance of empowering women in agriculture.

Ms Florence Rolle from the FAO Pakistan highlighted the gender disparities that persist in Pakistan's agricultural sector, noting that women have limited access to inputs, knowledge and financing. "Economic empowerment and digitalisation are key solutions to these issues," she said.



She also pointed out that while 70% of the female workforce in Pakistan is engaged in agriculture, and much of this labour is unpaid.

Dr Arjan De Haan from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in India discussed the financing gaps that hinder the development of climate-resilient food systems. "Agriculture employs 40% of Pakistan's labour force, but inefficiencies in land use, output wastage, and labour shortages caused by migration remain persistent challenges," **Dr De Haan** said, adding, "Small farmers, who are often the least able to adapt to climate impacts, are particularly vulnerable."

The panel discussion also underscored that tackling food insecurity and strengthening food systems in Pakistan will require a multi-faceted approach, including policy reforms, technological innovation, gender empowerment and significant financial investment.

Mr Aftab



Alam Khan, CEO of Resilient Future International, said there needs to be better coordination between the provincial and federal government, not only to get a better and holistic idea of the challenges but for more efficient implementation of the solutions as well.

Dr Akmal Siddiq, Technical Adviser, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, concluded the session and said, "We need to see if Pakistan is ready for



climate change, and where do we stand on water and food policies". He said that international institutions have a lot of money for crops resistant to climate impact, but Pakistan is in a difficult state to ask for that finance. However, one good thing that has happened in Pakistan is Laser Land Leveling, even in inner Punjab and Sindh and that helps greatly in water conservation.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Role of the Government

- Lead the development of strategies to link food production with consumer access, ensuring every step from farm to market is sustainable.

2. Role of Civil Society & Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

- Integrate food resilience and security goals into the national planning framework, promoting cross-industry collaboration.
- Revise and update the National Food Security Policy (2018) to incorporate climate resilience, align with the 2021 Food System Summit recommendations and focus more on supporting women farmers.
- Establish a National Adaptive Plan with provincial collaboration, using new research to shape strategies for climate-resilient food systems.
- Provide financial incentives and tax relief for small-scale farmers adopting sustainable practices, such as hydroponics and solar-powered farming.
- Strengthen funding mechanisms to incentivise private sector investments in resilient food systems and sustainable agriculture.
- Develop a national action plan to leverage genomics, molecular markers and biotechnology for climate-resilient crop breeding.
- Organise national expectation workshops and dialogue groups to advance food system transformation.
- Promote the use of satellite data for improved weather forecasting and crop health monitoring.
- Collaborate with local governments and communities to implement programmes that support the restoration of natural food systems.
- Lead initiatives to promote affordable diets and combat malnutrition through



awareness workshops, especially in vulnerable communities.

- Support joint initiatives at the local level to strengthen food systems and promote sustainable agricultural practices.
- Facilitate awareness campaigns on climate-resilient practices, particularly targeting small-scale and women farmers.
- Assist in building digital and financial literacy for farmers, especially women, empowering them with market access and modern farming techniques.

3. Role of Academia and Research Institutions

- Conduct joint research and development on identifying genes that enhance stress and salinity tolerance in crops like rice.
- Promote the use of diagnostics, genomics, and biotechnology to accelerate crop breeding for climate resilience.
- Focus on developing high-yield, low-water crops and exploring hydroponic systems that conserve water.
- Integrate digital literacy and education into agricultural training programmes to enhance farmers' adaptation to modern technologies.
- Collaborate with the government on region-specific research to align policies with local needs and climate challenges.

4. Role of the Private Sector

- Invest in digital tools and technologies that promote sustainable farming, such as weather-adaptive tech and water-saving systems.
- Collaborate with the government to fund and develop adaptive technologies, focusing on solar-powered farming and hydroponics.
- Provide financial support and incentives for small-scale farmers to adopt innovative agricultural practices.
- Engage in Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

to co-finance initiatives (such as insurance schemes) aimed at transforming food systems and enhancing climate resilience.

- Support credit access programmes for farmers, enabling them to adopt modern, sustainable practices.

5. Role of Media and Communication Platforms

- Raise awareness about the importance of climate-resilient food systems through targeted campaigns and storytelling.
- Promote success stories of sustainable agricultural practices to inspire broader adoption among farmers.
- Use digital platforms to disseminate information on smart tech tools and innovations in agriculture.

6. Role of Local Communities and Farmers

- Engage in community-driven programmes that promote biodiversity, sustainable farming practices and climate adaptation.
- Participate in capacity-building workshops to enhance skills in using modern agricultural technologies.
- Leverage community networks to implement localised food system strategies, ensuring adaptation to climate change.

7. Role of Philanthropic Organisations and International Donors

- Fund initiatives focused on food system resilience and provide grants for research on drought-resistant crops and sustainable irrigation.
- Support programmes aimed at enhancing digital access and financial literacy for farmers, particularly women.
- Facilitate the transfer of technology and knowledge through international collaborations and partnerships.



Thematic Session C-6: (High-Level Policy Dialogue) Beyond the Bottom Line: Co-Creating Philanthropic Impact

Moderator: Mr Tristan Ace, CEO, AVPN

Chair: Mr Saeed Ashraf Siddiqui, Senior Joint Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, GoP

Welcome Remarks: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, SDPI

Speakers:

1. Ms Kamyla Marvi, Director BATP
2. Ms Uzma Mansoor, SBP
3. Ms Roshan Khursheed Bharucha, Member, BoG, SDPI
4. Syed Sayem Ali, BoP

Panel Organisers: Engr. Ahad Nazir, Mr Abdullah Khalid, Ms Maheen Rehan & Mr Hammad Nadir, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Maheen Rehan & Ms Sania Panezai

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkEN4EGnYJs>

NARRATIVE REPORT

Speakers provided a roadmap for a more strategic, coordinated and impactful future for philanthropy in Pakistan. Exploring legal, financial, and social dimensions of philanthropy, and emphasising innovation and inclusivity, the speakers said with continued engagement from both national and international stakeholders, there was hope

for creating a more resilient and equitable society. The speakers explored pressing issues in Pakistan's philanthropic landscape and highlighted innovative approaches for maximising social impact.

Key leaders and experts in philanthropy came together for a high-level policy dialogue titled '**Beyond the Bottom Line: Co-Creating Philanthropic Impact**' moderated by **Mr Tristan Ace**, CEO of Asian Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN) and chaired by **Mr Saeed Ashraf Siddiqui**, Senior Joint Secretary for the Ministry of Economic Affairs.



Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, delivered the welcome remarks, emphasising the need for collaborative and strategic philanthropy that went beyond simple charity. **Dr Suleri** pointed out the growing recognition of philanthropy as a powerful tool for development and discussed SDPI's ongoing work to shape the philanthropic landscape in Pakistan.

Several prominent speakers from diverse sectors shared their insights, each advocating for a more strategic and sustainable approach to philanthropy.



Mr Tristan Ace highlighted the global scope of AVPN, which connected over 600 organisations from across the world, including corporate foundations, development institutions, and others. He outlined AVPN’s mission to mobilise private philanthropy, focusing on areas like climate change

She also stressed the importance of proper training programmes for marginalised communities to improve long-term economic stability.

Mr Saeed Ashraf Siddiqui, Senior Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, stressed the growing role of philanthropic organisations but acknowledged the difficulties in scaling these efforts and gauging their impact. He called for better coordination among NGOs and philanthropies, noting the need for a unified registration mechanism and greater capacity-building for local organisations. **Mr Siddiqui** further explained that the



and food security. “We are trying to move beyond traditional charity to an approach that drives innovation and impact,” **Mr Ace** said. He highlighted AVPN’s efforts to promote a gender-sensitive philanthropic approach in Pakistan, where there’s a strong focus on SDG 5 (i.e. gender equality).

Economic Affairs Division (EAD) had been instrumental in streamlining foreign aid to local NGOs and ensuring better tracking of funds.

Ms Kamyla Marvi, Director of the British Asian Trust, discussed the need for strategic, outcome-based philanthropy.

Former minister and senator, **Ms Roshan Khursheed Bharucha**, shared specific challenges faced in Balochistan, where poverty, lack of access to clean



water, and the impacts of climate change were particularly severe. She called for increased local government empowerment, tax rebates for women artisans, and a more robust approach to address gender inequality.



She emphasised the importance for collaboration and scale, citing the Trust’s approach to cost-effective, sustainable interventions that were measurable and impactful. According to **Ms Marvi**, focusing on results ensures long-term trust of donors and enhances the overall effectiveness of philanthropic programmes.

Ms Uzma Mansoor, Joint Director at the State Bank



of Pakistan (SBP), highlighted the crucial role of financial inclusion in the philanthropic ecosystem. She shared SBP's efforts to create a conducive policy environment for green financing, gender empowerment

and financial literacy, including the development of a green taxonomy in collaboration with the World Bank. Ms Mansoor also discussed initiatives to empower women in the financial sector, with policies designed to increase female representation in banks and improve access to financial services for marginalised groups.

Mr Sayem Ali, Chief Economist at the Bank of Punjab, discussed the challenges of making philanthropic projects sustainable, particularly in the aftermath of natural disasters such as floods. He called for public-private partnerships (PPPs) to drive more impactful, long-term solutions in areas like climate



resilience, healthcare, and education. He highlighted the Bank's own initiatives, including substantial investments in health, education and environmental sustainability projects, as well as efforts to enhance financial inclusion through services like the Kissan Card for farmers. He also noted the Bank's commitment to addressing environmental challenges, citing projects like the promotion of electric vehicles to combat smog. He emphasised the critical role of women in Pakistan's agriculture sector, announcing that the Bank had provided credit to over 75,000 women in rural areas this year.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is need to adopt an 'Outcome-Based Approach to Philanthropy'. Policies should focus on defining clear, measurable outcomes at the onset of any philanthropic initiative. There should be a robust plan of action that includes outcome-based financing to ensure that resources are effectively utilised and that the impact can be measured and evaluated.
2. Local Governments need to be strengthened by providing them with financial stability and autonomy. Offer tax incentives to enhance productivity, enabling local authorities to drive community development, particularly focusing on the capacity-building of women and marginalised groups.
3. Cross-sector collaborations are essential where organisations, both public and private, work together to amplify their impact. Collective efforts will achieve far-reaching and sustainable outcomes, which are often limited when initiatives are undertaken in isolation.



Thematic Session C-7:

Environmental Conflict and Social Dialogue in Pakistan

Moderator: Dr Zainab Ahmed, BNU

Chair: Prof. Dr Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman, HEC, Pakistan

Speakers:

1. Ms Imrana Tiwana, BNU
2. Prof. Dr Arshi Saleem Hashmi, Dean - FCS, NDU, Islamabad
3. Dr Rafi Amir-ud-Din, COMSATS University, Lahore
4. Mr Qazi Saqib Basir, Muslim Aid, Pakistan

Panel Organisers: Ms Romila Qamar, SDPI | Dr Zainab Ahmed, BNU

Rapporteurs: Ms Aqsa Huma & Mr Fahad Nadeem

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APtWVQAcshY>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Amid political and economic challenges, environmental conflicts have further exacerbated the situation for Pakistan, inflicting a loss of 100 billion dollars due to climate change compared to around 130 billion dollars total external debt.

This was the crux of a thematic session titled 'Environmental Conflict and Social Dialogue in Pakistan'. Speakers collectively underlined the urgent need for collective wisdom, institutional mechanisms, and sustainable solutions to address environmental challenges. They also stressed that environmental security is integral to economic growth, food security, and societal well-being.

The session was moderated by **Dr Zainab Ahmed** from Beaconhouse National University (BNU), Lahore.

She shared that the session was being conducted in collaboration with SDPI and BNU Center for Policy Research that serves as a hub for policy-oriented research developing policy recommendations in diverse fields. She also briefed the audience about the focus of the session.

Dr Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman, HEC, said environmental conflict was one of the main challenges the





country was currently facing. He said future wars would be fought over clean water and air, therefore factors disturbing environment should be handled through collective wisdom. He said huge agriculture land was being used for housing societies, which would create serious challenges for the food basket. "Nature is being disturbed and the government should come up with an institutional mechanism to ensure that no agriculture land is used for other purposes," the HEC Chairman emphasised, adding that another big challenge was deforestation which had disturbed the weather pattern leading to increase in temperature affecting crops. He also recommended sustainable institutional arrangements to ensure reforestation.

currently 8% of the GDP was affected by climate change which was expected to reach 30% by 2050, ultimately reducing life expectancy.



Dr Arshi Hashmi from the National Defence University said that environmental conflict could not be taken in isolation and other factors were also making it challenging. She said sustainable peace was directly linked to secure environment, adding that environment conflict affected each and every segment of the society.



Ms Imrana Tiwana from Beaconhouse National University said environment was weighing high as



Mr Qazi Saqib Basir from Muslim Aid said Pakistan had suffered 100 billion dollars of losses due to natural disasters caused by climate change during the last two decades, while the total external debt of the country since its creation was around 130 billion dollars. He further said that due

to rising temperature and climate change around 70 to 80% development of the country had been washed away.

Dr Rafi Amir ud Din from COMSATS University, Lahore, said conventional measures such as bans and taxes showed limited success in reducing single use plastic bag usage. Previous bans on plastic bags in Islamabad were transient and largely ineffective, he added.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Facilitate Community Engagement in Water Distribution: Provincial governments and water management authorities should collaborate to address water distribution disputes through community and stakeholder engagement; and implement an inclusive, transparent approach that promotes equitable access and sustainable development.
2. Implement Comprehensive Land Use Policies: Local governments and regulatory bodies should develop and enforce policies that protect agricultural land, restricting housing schemes to barren land to safeguard food security. A strategic land-use policy will ensure that productive agricultural areas are preserved.
3. Establish Climate Resilience through Institutional Arrangements: Government agencies should create sustainable institutional frameworks that prioritise climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, promoting resilience against climate change impacts.
4. Promote Sustainable Agriculture and Climate-Adaptive Practices: Agricultural departments and research institutions should support the shift to sustainable agriculture practices and encourage crop diversification aligned with changing weather patterns. This includes developing and disseminating guidelines for climate-compatible crop selection.
5. Integrate Social Dialogue in Environmental Strategies: Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and community leaders should engage in continuous dialogue with communities, integrating social discourse with sustainable environmental practices. Sharing information and raising awareness in a coordinated manner will ensure that environmental solutions are community driven.
6. Leverage Socio-Political Influence for Environmental Advocacy: Political leaders and local authorities should collaborate with environmental experts to incorporate environmental issues into the socio-political agenda. Use nudging techniques, such as informational and cultural incentives, to drive sustainable behaviour change in traditional communities.
7. Empower Local Governments with Legal Authority: Local governments should have legal authority and resources to enforce environmental laws within their jurisdictions. This will improve effectiveness of local enforcement and encourage community-level compliance.
8. Address Urban Sprawl through Multi-Stakeholder Platforms: Urban planning authorities and multi-stakeholder platforms should coordinate efforts to manage urban expansion and resource allocation. Inclusive decision-making processes should prioritise community perspectives, ensuring that sustainability remains a key focus in urban development plans.
9. Foster Dialogue Between Communities and Political Leaders: Establish forums and communication channels that connect communities with their political representatives to collaboratively address environmental challenges. Effective dialogue can build trust and drive meaningful, sustainable change at the local level.



Thematic Session C-8:

Women in Frontline Roles: Breaking Barriers and Leading Change in Pakistan

Moderator: Ms Zainab Naeem, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

Speakers:

1. Ms Sarah Hassan, PepsiCo Pakistan
2. Ms Rabia Khattak, Head of D&I, Jazz
3. Ms Nabila Zar Malik, Head of Partnerships and Communications, UN-Women
4. Syeda Kiran Altaf, Country Head HR, Syngenta
5. Ms Halima Khan, Head of Sustainability and Corporate Affairs, Energy Update

Panel Organiser: Ms Zainab Naeem, SDPI

Rapporteur: Mr Umar Farooq

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H30qEesdRSA>



NARRATIVE REPORT

The leading women in various sectors emphasized the need to break down barriers and create environments that foster equality, empowerment, and success for women in all industries as in Pakistan, where gender disparities in the workforce persist, a new wave of leaders is emerging, advocating for transformative changes that will uplift women and provide them with the opportunities they deserve. This was the crux of the discussion held during the thematic session titled **“Empowering Women to Break Barriers and Lead Change in Pakistan”**. The core message from these women leaders was clear that women should not only participate in the workforce but should be encouraged to take leadership roles, inspire change, and be recognized for their contributions.

Ms Sarah Hassan, a senior executive at PepsiCo Pakistan,

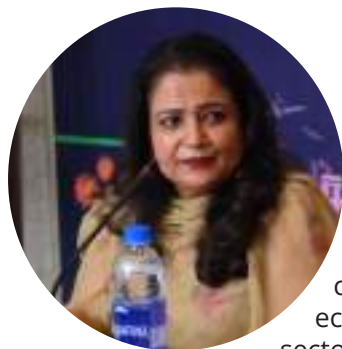


highlighted the importance of creating supportive workplace environments, such as dedicated mothers' rooms and childcare centres, which help women strike a balance between their personal and professional lives. She emphasized that enabling women from marginalized

communities to enter the workforce is key to achieving gender equality and driving societal change.

Similarly, **Ms Rabia Khattak**, Head of Diversity and Inclusion at Jazz, underscored the necessity for organizations to actively implement policies that

ensure equal employment opportunities for women. She stressed that women are capable of achieving what once seemed impossible, and organizations must continue to support their journeys towards success.



Ms Nabila Malick, advocated for bold decision-making and an inclusive care economy that recognizes and compensates women's economic contributions. "All sectors — public and private — must work together to ensure that women are empowered and supported in every aspect of their professional and personal lives," she said.

Despite facing numerous societal, cultural, and institutional challenges, the women advocating for change remain resolute.

Syeda Kiran Altaf, an agriculture industry expert, stressed that while women in rural areas contribute significantly to the agricultural sector, their work is often undervalued. "We must ensure that the work of women in the fields is properly compensated and acknowledged," she emphasised.

Ms Halima Khan, another influential leader in the corporate space, emphasized the importance of women developing the resilience to face obstacles head-on. "Women need to work alongside men, and their thinking should broaden to participate in the workforce at all levels," she said. This shift in mindset, according to her, is essential for fostering a truly equal and progressive workplace.



Concluding the session, **Ms Zainab Naeem** from SDPI thanked the speakers for the positive

notes and messages and said the key recommendations will be shared with the stakeholders from the private and public sectors.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The government, private sector companies, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should actively support and encourage women to take on leadership positions, breaking societal barriers and inspiring change across industries.
2. Employers in both public and private sectors must invest in creating inclusive workplaces that include mother's rooms, childcare centres and infrastructure that fosters a healthy work-life balance for working mothers.
3. Community organisations and social enterprises should focus on empowering women in underserved areas by providing skills training, financial literacy programmes and job opportunities, enabling them to join and thrive in the workforce.
4. Policymakers and economic planners should prioritise developing a care economy that values and supports women's unpaid labour, ensuring that women's economic contributions are recognised and adequately supported.
5. Public institutions and private companies should implement policies that provide equal employment opportunities for women, ensuring that workplaces are diverse and inclusive.
6. Agricultural boards and labour unions should advocate for fair wages for the 60-70% of women working in the agricultural sector, recognising their contributions and ensuring they receive equitable compensation.
7. Educational institutions, tech companies, and training centres should collaborate to enable women to enter and excel in high-tech fields, offering scholarships, mentorship, and training programmes to bridge the gender gap in technology.
8. Government, private sector and civil society must work together to implement comprehensive strategies that promote women's empowerment, focusing on education, healthcare, financial inclusion and legal protection.
9. Community leaders, mentors and educational institutions should inspire and empower women to make decisions that advance their personal and professional lives.



Plenary 4.1:

Annual State of Renewable Energy 2024

Moderator: Engr. Ubaid ur Rehman Zia, Senior Research Associate & Lead Energy Unit, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Co-Moderator: Ms Saleha Qureshi, Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Technical Presentation: Engr. Ahad Nazir, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad - *Annual State of Renewable Energy 2024*

Opening Remark: Mr Adil Khattak, CEO, Attock Refinery Limited & Member, Board of Governors, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Distinguished Speakers:

1. Mr Shah Jahan Mirza, Managing Director, Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB), Ministry of Energy (Power Division), Government of Pakistan
2. Mr Hussain Talib, Head of External Affairs, Unilever Pakistan
3. Mr Tanveer Afzal Mirza, Company Secretary, United Energy Pakistan (UEP)
4. Mr Tauseef H. Farooqi, Former Chairman, National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA)
5. Daniyal Siddiqui, DSC Energy Ltd

MoU Signing between SDPI and NPO

Special Remarks: Muhammad Alamgir Chaudhry, CEO, National Productivity Organization (NPO)

Plenary Organisers: Ms Zainab Babar, Dr Khalid Waleed, Engr. Ubaid ur Rehman Zia & Ms Saira Adnan, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Ms Zainab Babar & Mr Nazar Muhammad

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTyuLKyxcol>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Energy experts debated on the status of renewable energy sector, saying that the mushrooming growth of self-generated electricity was a major threat to national grid. The experts from across Pakistan's energy sector gathered to discuss the annual state of renewable energy in Pakistan in a plenary titled 'Annual State of

Renewable Energy 2024'. The discussions revealed both the progress made and the significant obstacles that still lie ahead in transitioning towards a more sustainable energy system.

Mr Adil Khattak, CEO of Attock Refinery and Attock Gen Limited opened the event with focus on the importance of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in providing

“affordable, sustainable, and clean energy for all”. He pointed out that Pakistan was currently producing more energy than it needs, which was not only causing distribution inefficiencies but was also becoming a hurdle in transitioning towards renewable energy. “Net metering punishes the have-nots for the purchasing power of the haves because those who can afford the cost of solar panels are moving off the grid already,” **Mr Khattak** said. However, he remained optimistic about Pakistan’s renewable energy prospects, stating that the country’s transition to renewables was not only “positive” but also “imperative” provided the challenges were addressed head-on.

government.” He advocated for market liberalisation to allow a more dynamic energy market that could support green energy initiatives.

Mr Tauseef H. Farooqi, former chairman of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), elaborated on diverse models of energy production. He criticised the current energy system, stating that it is “neither affordable, nor reliable, and certainly not sustainable”. **Mr Farooqi** explained that while private sector involvement was essential, the government must create profitable, long-term options for investors to thrive. He also noted that unless battery storage prices decrease, consumers might increasingly turn to self-generation, making the grid redundant.



Engr. Ahad Nazir from the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) shared



the Annual State of Renewable Energy 2024 Report, offering a snapshot of Pakistan’s current energy situation. As of March 2024, Pakistan’s total power generation capacity stands at 42.134 GW. Of this, 2.5% is lost due to line losses, and 17% is attributed to distribution losses. Renewable energy sources contribute only 6.8% to the total capacity, with wind being the primary source, followed by solar and biomass, according to **Mr Nazir**.

Mr Farooqi also shared details on the current status of the Carbon Trading and Bilateral Contract Market (CTBCM) in Pakistan. He said NEPRA had already approved the plan in 2023, and all that is left now is the approval of the wheeling charges by the government. “If the wheeling charges are affordable, we will soon see the CTBCM in Pakistan,” he added.

Responding to this, **Mr Daniyal Siddiqui** from DSC Energy Ltd. said that fast-tracking CTBCM could stimulate investment and further the green finance goals of Pakistan. He said there was a lot of interest from the industry towards this platform which would also make it more viable for them to move towards solar energy.

Mr Tanveer Afzal Mirza, Company Secretary at the United Energy Pakistan (UEP) said despite political and economic challenges, the private sector had demonstrated a willingness to invest, particularly in the wind energy sector, which had attracted nearly \$3 billion in investments.

Mr Imran Rana, spokesperson for K-Electric, shared that the utility company aimed to source 30% of its energy from renewables. “Despite the political and economic climate, we have received a positive response from both financiers and the government,” **Mr Rana** said.

Mr Hussain Talib, Head of External Affairs at Unilever Pakistan, stressed the importance of collaboration in achieving zero emissions. “Organisations cannot do this alone,” he said, pointing to the Power Wheeling Coalition – a partnership of companies already working together to develop policies for renewable energy, adding, “But the implementation still stays with the



Mr Shah Jahan Mirza, Managing Director of the Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB), said while Pakistan had made strides — generating 38% of its energy from renewables in the last fiscal year – there was still much work to be done. He pointed out that the country’s energy



planning was based on GDP growth projections, which often did not align with actual demand, leading to inefficiencies in energy generation and distribution. To reach net-zero emissions, the entire community needs to come together, he said. This will require engagement from all stakeholders—government, private sector, academia, and civil society—to develop policies and infrastructure that support Pakistan’s renewable energy goals, Mr Mirza added.

All participating experts agreed that the renewable energy sector is poised for growth, however, they recommended that to make that happen “a coordinated, top-down approach is crucial”.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The government should provide financial incentives, subsidies, and grants to support the installation of solar panels, encouraging widespread adoption of clean energy.
2. The Ministry of Energy (Power Division) must prioritise adopting technological advancements and innovative solutions to diversify Pakistan’s energy mix and enhance renewable energy capacity.
3. Regulatory authorities and financial institutions should remove financial hurdles by offering attractive financing options, reducing risks for investors, and providing long-term financial stability.
4. Government agencies should build infrastructure and establish institutions in resource-rich areas like Sindh and Balochistan to harness untapped renewable energy potential.
5. Policymakers should develop robust policies to address the challenges linked to renewable energy and create an enabling environment for growth.
6. Private sector and local manufacturers should be incentivised to produce renewable energy equipment domestically, reducing dependence on imports and creating jobs.
7. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) should collaborate to launch large-scale renewable energy projects across the country, targeting areas with high potential for solar, wind, and hydro energy.
8. Government and international donors should collaborate on joint funding models for renewable energy projects to secure adequate financing and mitigate risks.
9. Financial institutions and regulatory bodies should launch green bonds and provide tax credits for renewable energy investments to attract both domestic and foreign investors.
10. The government needs to prioritise political stability and ensure consistency in policies to instil investor confidence and support long-term renewable energy goals.
11. Urban planners and energy developers should focus on building infrastructure capable of supporting renewable energy systems, such as transmission lines and energy storage facilities.
12. Energy sector experts should focus on implementing smart grid technology and advanced energy storage solutions to optimise renewable energy distribution.
13. Policymakers should align energy policies with diversified financing mechanisms and robust infrastructure planning to create a comprehensive renewable energy strategy.
14. The government should address inefficiencies by enhancing governance structures and hiring experienced professionals with expertise in the power sector.
15. Regulatory authorities should enable a Multiple Seller and Multiple Buyer Model to promote competition and efficiency in the renewable energy market.
16. The Ministry of Finance and environmental agencies should establish carbon markets and green financing mechanisms to attract investments and promote low-carbon growth.
17. The government should encourage privatisation in the renewable energy sector to leverage private sector expertise, innovation, and capital for



Closing Plenary 4.2:

From Fragility to Resilience: Enhancing Sustainable Development

Master of Ceremony: Dr Fareeha Armughan, Research Fellow & Lead-Center of Evidence Action, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Introductory Note: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Chief Guest: Senator Dr Musadik Masood Malik, Federal Minister for Energy (Petroleum Division), Government of Pakistan (Online)

Special Remarks:

- Senator Farhatullah Babar
- Ms Roshan Khursheed Bharucha, Member, Board of Governors, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Presentation: Mr Irfan Ahmad Chatha, Associate Research Fellow, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan – Preliminary Findings of Provincial Development Monitor

Awards Ceremony:

- **SDPI's Outstanding Award in Research** – Ms Rabia Tabassum, SDPI
- **Excellence Performance Award** – Ms Sahar Basharat, SDPI
- **Green Responsibility: Nurturing the Planet Initiative Award** – Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Mr Khurram Shahzad, Ms Sania Amin, Rana Junaid Zahid, Mr Muhammad Riaz, Ms Zainab Babar & Mr Mujeeb ur Rehman (Gardener)
- **Best Pavilion Award** – PepsiCo Pakistan

SDPI Team Group Photograph

Vote of Thanks:

- Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairperson, Board of Governors, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
- Ms Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC), Government of Pakistan
- Dr Sajid Amin Javed, Deputy Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Plenary Organisers: Mr Hassan Murtaza & Mr Asim Zahoor, SDPI

Rapporteurs: Mr Tahir Zaman, Mr Nazar Muhammad & Mr Ibraheem Khan

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwwbpF8a5vM>



NARRATIVE REPORT

Senator **Dr Musadik Masood Malik**, Federal Minister for Energy (Petroleum Division), said Pakistan was heading towards the right direction as it had successfully controlled inflation, achieved substantial growth in agriculture sector and witnessed an increase in foreign reserves. He was speaking at the **concluding plenary** of the four-day the 27th Sustainable Development Conference.

The Minister said the current

government had three key priorities, and they were decreasing inflation, ensuring better public life and reducing poverty. "The government aspires to take the GDP growth rate from 2.4% to 3% as its agriculture sector was growing at a rate of 6.3%, ensuring better economic activity in the rural areas," he said.

He further stated that investment in social protection initiatives like the BISP and increase in PSDP funding would help ensure development and increase in livelihood opportunities for the younger generation. The Minister said decreasing policy rate, rising foreign reserves and growing Foreign Direct Investment commitments were optimistic indicators that strengthened the country's economic outlook.

Ms Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC), said collaboration between the SDPI and the Ministry of Climate Change and



Environmental Coordination had forged new synergies, with the intention to drive well-informed policy discourse. She said Pakistan was committed to bringing resilience at the community

level against adverse impacts of climate change. At the upcoming COP29, Pakistan will passionately be advocating for climate finance, technology transfer and capacity building of vulnerable communities, she emphasised. **Ms Alam** said that she would be sharing recommendations from this conference at the COP29.

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI in his introductory speech thanked the esteemed



guests and shared that the 27th annual Conference and 2nd SI Expo under the theme of "From Fragility to Resilience: Enhancing Sustainable Development" addressed the challenges of war, economic recession, and climate change.

He shared that over four days, 52 sessions were held, including high-level plenaries, thematic sessions, and fireside chats with over 300 distinguished speakers from 14 countries. The event also highlighted the private sector's leadership in green investments. Discussions covered economic empowerment, sustainable agriculture, women's inclusion, climate change, and emerging technologies. The recommendations from the conference will be shared with relevant ministries and will contribute to Pakistan's stance at COP29 in Baku, he added.

While presenting the SDPI's preliminary findings of 'Provincial Development Monitor', **Mr Irfan Ahmad Chatha**, Associate Research Fellow at SDPI, said that 'Provincial Development Monitor' was developed in response to the government's demand for data driven decision-making, offering a realistic snapshot of development



across provinces and districts in Pakistan. By using the 2023 population census and latest provincial statistics, a derived Human Development Index (HDI) approach was adopted, incorporating education, living standards, and health, further added. The findings



show a slight decline in Pakistan's HDI from 0.699 in 2019 to 0.691 in 2023 due to COVID-19 and flood shocks. **Mr Chatha** added that the education indices improved, while health and living conditions declined, reflecting high inflation and effects from the Pandemic. Islamabad saw a minor increase from 0.92 to 0.94. However, significant disparities exist within provinces, as all the bottom-ranked districts are located in Balochistan. Giving the recommendations, he emphasized on reducing regional disparities, disaster preparedness, strengthening public finance management, equitable resource allocation, and learning from high-performing districts to improve development outcomes.

In his special remarks, senior politician of PPPP, **Senator**

Farhatullah Babar, said that as all good things come to an end, similarly this Conference has also come to an end. He added, "My takeaway from this Conference is that the more I learned about the issues confronting Pakistan, the more I discovered how little I knew and how much more needs to be learned. And the more I heard what has



been done to overcome the problems, the more I discovered and realized how much more needs to be done." In the end, **Senator Babar** congratulated Dr Abid Suleri and team SDPI for successfully conducting this Conference.

Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairperson of the Board of Governors at SDPI, thanked the esteemed guests and stated that over the past four days, they had concluded the 27th SDC, which has been their longest and most content-rich event to date. He shared that this year, SDC featured over 50 panel discussions and 300 speakers. Thousands participated in meaningful exchanges on sustainable development, economic



growth, social justice, and environmental protection, with a special focus on climate change. Ambassador Kakakhel extended his gratitude to the captain of the ship and team lead, Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri and the team SDPI; and the administration of Pak-China Friendship Centre for their cooperation. Furthermore, he added, "The work of the SDC

was done by a team led by the indefatigable Ms Uzma Haroon, who is one of the hardest working people I have seen and worked with, in my many, many years or decades of public life. So, I would like to thank Ms Uzma and her very able team for their dedicated work." He said that this SDC has generated valuable insights and actionable options to address Pakistan's pressing challenges.

In her special remarks, **Senator Roshan Khursheed Bharucha**, member of the SDPI Board of Governors,

commended the SDPI leadership and staff for organizing a wonderful event. she expressed that the four days had been eye-opening, particularly in relation to Balochistan. Referring to the grim situation there, she stated, "Looking at Balochistan and the figures we



saw, I think we are going back to worse." **Senator Bharucha** highlighted that much work remains to be done in areas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), poverty, hunger, education, and health. She also noted that she had learned a great deal to take back home.

Dr Sajid Amin Javed, Deputy Executive Director, SDPI, said that no journey from fragility to resilience can be completed without robust, strong, and very trusted partnerships. He expressed immense gratitude to more than 40 partners, whose contribution was a key component in making this Conference successful. Dr Javed applauded the teamwork of the SDPI staff, along



with the support from the IT team, photographers, journalists, and especially the volunteers, who dedicated their time and effort to the SDC and are always regarded as part of the SDPI team. "As Senator Farhatullah Babar said, all good things must come to an end, and so has this 27th SDC. However, I believe this is the promise we always make — that this marks the beginning of the

journey toward the 28th SDC," he added.

The plenary concluded with the award giving ceremony. Awards were presented to the following members of SDPI staff and one award was given for the best pavilion at the 2nd Sustainable Investment Expo:

- **SDPI's Outstanding Award in Research** – Ms Rabia Tabassum, SDPI
- **Excellence Performance Award** – Ms Sahar Basharat, SDPI
- **Green Responsibility: Nurturing the Planet Initiative Award** – Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Mr Khurram Shahzad, Ms Sania Amin, Rana Junaid Zahid, Mr Muhammad Riaz, Ms Zainab Babar & Mr Mujeeb ur Rehman (Gardener)
- **Best Pavilion Award** – PepsiCo Pakistan





POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Closing Plenary of the 27th SDC 2024 highlighted Seven Streams, that offer a comprehensive strategy to achieve sustainable development, economic stability, and resilience while promoting equity, education, and innovation across Pakistan:

Stream I: Energy Transition and Modernisation

- The public, namely government and the private, namely oil and gas corporations should redefine their roles to focus on clean and renewable energy, transitioning from fossil fuels to sustainable energy systems.
- Energy sector leaders must prioritise advancements in renewable energy technologies, including solar, wind, and green hydrogen, to create a modern, sustainable energy infrastructure.

Stream II: Education and Workforce Development

- Academia, Civil Society and the Government must work together to reform curricula to align with future workforce needs, focusing on skill development and critical thinking in areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies.
- Academic institutions and community programmes should educate future generations to think innovatively - vertically, horizontally, and non-linearly fostering creative solutions to resilience challenges.

Stream III: Economic Stabilisation and Equity

- The public and private sectors should implement strategies to generate employment opportunities, stabilise the economy, and reduce the burden of inflation on the public.
- Social welfare programmes like the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) should receive expanded funding to address poverty and improve livelihoods.

- The Ministry of Finance and economic planners should enhance fiscal accountability and transparency, ensuring that resources are effectively allocated towards high-impact initiatives.

Stream IV: Community Resilience and Inclusive Growth

- Local governments and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should focus on skill-building and capacity development within communities, empowering children and marginalised groups to adapt to future challenges.
- Provincial governments should prioritise development in underprivileged regions, implementing disaster resilience measures and ensuring equitable resource allocation.

Stream V: Promote Inclusive Growth and Equity

- Policymakers and industry leaders should focus on reducing economic inequality by creating inclusive growth policies that spotlight underrepresented groups in development strategies.

Stream VI: Technology and Connectivity

- Government and tech industry leaders should leverage digital tools, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data analytics, to enhance national resilience and integrate Pakistan into global digital networks.
- Independent oversight bodies and development agencies should regularly monitor and evaluate interventions to ensure they are effective and equitable.

Stream VII: Cultivating National Dedication and Cohesion

- Community leaders and educators should foster a culture of national commitment and cohesion, inspiring citizens to contribute passionately toward Pakistan's progress and resilience.



Key Recommendations from the Fireside Chats

Partnership for Action in Climate and Energy

1. Data-Driven Evidence for Climate Finance

- Developing countries lack robust data systems, which hinders their ability to secure climate finance. Strengthen climate modelling, create information portals, and ensure compliance with transparency frameworks. These steps will enable evidence-backed, bankable projects to attract international funding.



2. Strengthening Governance for Disaster Preparedness

- Governance gaps escalate climate-induced hazards into disasters. Address these gaps by integrating risk modelling into planning and enhancing institutional capacities. Collaborate with international partners to improve resilience and preparedness.

Air Pollution and Health: PM2.5 and Air-Q+ Estimation of Health End Points

1. Addressing Housing Inequality

- Urban areas like Islamabad suffer from unequal housing occupancy and resource allocation, with a small population occupying disproportionate land. To resolve this, data analytics can evaluate housing distribution and resource use. Implementing data-driven policies ensures equitable urban planning, enabling lower-income groups to access adequate housing.

2. Enhancing Climate Resilience through AI

- Urban areas face growing risks from inadequate climate-smart planning. AI offers



a solution by predicting climate risks and generating actionable scenarios for urban development. Integrating AI into planning enables risk assessment and sustainable strategies, including expanding green spaces and improving resource management.

PepsiCo's rPET Journey

1. Enhancing Collection Infrastructure

- The beverage industry struggles to recycle PET bottles due to limited collection capacity. Expanding infrastructure and collaborating with stakeholders to establish more collection points, alongside consumer education on proper disposal, can significantly improve recycling rates.

2. Increasing Awareness and Education

- Low consumer awareness about recycled PET products hinders demand and sustainability efforts. Launching targeted campaigns to highlight the environmental benefits and quality of recycled materials can foster informed consumer choices and sustainable behaviours.



Inclusive Climate Investment

1. Enhancing Gender-Responsive Budgeting

- Climate projects often fail to address women's unique needs, reducing their effectiveness. Implementing mandatory gender-responsive budgeting ensures equitable resource allocation, enhancing outcomes and empowering communities, as seen in successful projects like Kenya's climate-smart agriculture initiatives.

2. Establishing Women-Led Community Resilience Hubs

- Women face critical challenges during climate disasters, including inadequate sanitation and healthcare access. Creating women-led resilience hubs in vulnerable areas can provide essential services, ensuring inclusive disaster responses and fostering effective climate resilience.



Private Sector Role in Climate Initiatives

1. Enhance Climate Financing Access

- Limited access to climate financing in Pakistan hinders decarbonization projects. Establishing dedicated climate finance mechanisms can address unique risks and encourage investment in innovative agricultural practices, enabling organizations to undertake vital projects.

2. Promote Sustainable Agricultural Practices

- Traditional farming methods in Pakistan significantly contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Training programs on sustainable practices, such as alternate wetting and drying in rice and feed additives in dairy, can help farmers reduce emissions and adopt eco-friendly methods.

centralized platform for real-time data sharing among environmental and health agencies will improve monitoring and enable timely responses to air pollution's health impacts.

2. Implement Policy Interventions for Air Quality Improvement

- Air pollution contributes to 15% of deaths in Pakistan, demanding urgent policy action. Policymakers should enforce stricter emissions standards and promote cleaner transportation to reduce PM2.5 levels and enhance public health outcomes.

Pink Together, Stronger Forever: Nobody Fights Alone (An Awareness Session on Breast Cancer)



Air Pollution and Health: PM2.5 and Air-Q+ Estimation of Health End Points, A Review and Analysis

1. Enhance Data Collection and Sharing

- Pakistan lacks a robust system for collecting and sharing air quality and health data between relevant departments. Establishing a

1. Increase Awareness and Early Detection Programs

- High breast cancer mortality rates in Pakistan stem from limited awareness and delayed detection. Community-based campaigns and regular screenings can educate on risk factors and promote early diagnosis. Partnering with health organizations to host seminars and screenings during awareness drives can effectively engage communities.

2. Improve Healthcare Infrastructure for Cancer Treatment

- Limited access to advanced healthcare facilities worsens breast cancer outcomes in Pakistan. Investments in screening, diagnosis, and treatment infrastructure are crucial for reducing mortality. Collaborating with governments and NGOs can establish breast clinics and expand services in underserved areas.



Collaborative Approaches to Environmental and Social Responsibility

1. Enhancing Community Engagement Through Tree Plantation Initiatives

- Schools often lack active community involvement in addressing environmental issues. Organizing tree plantation drives where students, teachers, and parents collaboratively plant trees fosters shared responsibility for sustainability. Beaconhouse's initiative of having each student plant five trees for their 50th anniversary sets a model for other schools to engage families and communities in environmental stewardship.

2. Collaborative Professional Development for



- Inadequate investment in renewable energy and grid infrastructure restricts wind and solar power integration, leading to inefficiencies. Prioritizing grid upgrades and renewable energy investments will make these sources more accessible and reliable. Collaborating with international partners for funding and expertise can build a robust framework for integrating renewables and lowering energy costs.

Sustainability Governance of China's Global Infrastructure Investment

Underserved Schools

- Underserved schools face challenges due to limited access to quality teacher training programs. A collaborative approach, where experienced educators mentor teachers in

1. Enhance Local Expertise in Sustainability Governance

- Research on Chinese infrastructure investments in Global South countries is often dominated by Northern researchers, sidelining local perspectives. Collaborating with local scholars and stakeholders can ensure sustainability governance aligns with regional contexts. Partnerships between Chinese and local institutions can co-develop studies to address environmental and social impacts inclusively.

2. Foster Multistakeholder Engagement for Sustainable Development

- Excluding key stakeholders from policymaking often overlooks local sustainability concerns. Multistakeholder platforms can enable dialogue between Chinese investors, local governments, and communities to collaboratively address challenges. Regular consultations can better align investment strategies with sustainable development goals, especially for projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.



underserved communities, can bridge this gap. Beaconhouse's program of each teacher dedicating 10 hours annually to training nearby schools offers a replicable model for uplifting education quality across communities.

Danish Energy Transition Program in Pakistan

1. Long-Term Vision and Political Stability

- Pakistan's renewable energy sector is hindered by political instability and inconsistent policies. Establishing a unified energy strategy with political consensus, similar to Denmark's sustained approach since the 1970s, can ensure policy stability. Engaging all political parties to commit to this vision will promote long-term investment and development in renewable energy.



2. Investment in Renewable Energy Infrastructure

