Sustainable Development in the Times of COVID-19

14-17 December 2020 | Islamabad, Pakistan

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Edited by: Uzma T. Haroon, Saleem Khilji and Imrana Niazi
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A note of thanks to the rapporteurs for writing the session reports and to the panel organisers for reviewing and polishing the reports where required.
INTRODUCTION

Introduction to SDPI’s Twenty-third Sustainable Development Conference titled Sustainable Development in the Times of COVID-19
14 – 17 December 2020
Islamabad, Pakistan

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) held its Twenty-third Sustainable Development Conference (SDC) from 14 – 17 December 2020 in Islamabad, Pakistan. The overarching theme of the Conference was Sustainable Development in the Times of COVID-19. Due to the ongoing pandemic, it was the very first time that the annual Conference was held on a virtual platform with speakers hosted from the following 26 countries: Afghanistan, Africa, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Brunei, Canada, China, Ecuador, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the Netherlands, the UK and the US. Of the 45 sessions, there were 9 plenary sessions and 36 concurrent panels. During the four-day Conference, 193 speakers joined from Pakistan while another 63 came from the countries mentioned above. It was attended by an audience of over 6,800 from 84 countries.

About the Overarching Theme: In an unprecedented turn of events, the year 2020 saw COVID-19 pandemic take over the world. The world since COVID-19 is not the same as it was before. Multilateral organizations have already warned about global recessions and major food crisis after the health emergency. Scientists are yet to determine how the virus evolves and human response to it. Keeping this in view, SDPI’s Twenty-third Sustainable Development Conference specifically focussed on the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) and a changing world order since the outbreak of the pandemic. The Conference deliberated upon how the macroeconomic developments, trading across borders, and social safety-nets evolved as governments around the world responded to this challenge and were getting ready to grab some of the opportunities, mainly digitalization of economy, telehealth, distance learning, etc.

These opportunities may help in reducing inequalities in Asian countries provided they are able to overcome digital divide between the developed and the underdeveloped world. It all implies that other threats the humanity is being warned about, including climate change, food insecurity; recession and unstable economies, to name a few, are real and we need to be prepared for them.

This Conference invited experts and researchers from academia and think tanks as well as policy makers to come forward and deliberate together on the key questions and propose solutions in the context of health, climate change, migration, human rights, energy, social protection and good governance, water issues, cultural diplomacy in the times of COVID-19 and much more.

This year’s Conference reflected on what worked and what did not in the fields of health and social safety nets, economy and trade, food security and supply chains, non/availability of water, impacts on migration, climate change and environment, cultural diplomacy, how was it impacting our day-to-day life, methods of governance, education, tourism, cybernetics, artificial intelligence in short, the security of humankind. Speakers were invited not only to deliberate upon the priority areas in the times of COVID-19 but also to share their best practices, experiences, lessons learnt and the way forward. They deliberated on how the pandemic era would impact the last decade of action with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Where do the countries need to invest more in order to recover and improve? How is it impacting the different vulnerable groups of society, i.e., children, women, transgender, minorities, students, small business holders, daily wagers, etc.? What impact it may put on culture, art and literature, social relationships, politics, media, etc.?

These were some of the areas addressed by the speakers during the four-day Conference. A peer reviewed conference anthology based on papers presented on the occasion was launched at the succeeding Conference. Keeping up with this tradition, the Twenty-third SDC showcased launch of the SDC 2019 anthology titled ‘Sustainable Development in a Digital Society’, a peer reviewed publication. It is available for download at https://sdpi.org/sdconference/Sustainable-Development-in-the-Times-of-COVID-19/publications
Volumes 3 and 4 of SDPI’s Journal of Development Policy, Research & Practice were also launched. The Journal’s volumes can be viewed at https://www.sdpi.org/journal/

The following sections in this special SDC Bulletin cover the crux of the discussion in 45 sessions during the four days. Readers can also visit the recorded videos of the sessions at the given link:
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Donors:
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8. International Labor Organization
9. International Union Against Tuberculosis against Lung Disease – Warning on Tobacco Products
10. Malala Fund
11. The World Bank, Pakistan Office
12. The World Bank, Washington DC Office
13. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: Sub-regional Office for South and South-West Asia
14. Water Aid
15. Nestle-Pakistan

Knowledge partners:
16. The Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future at Boston University
17. Allama Iqbal Open University
18. Consumer Unity & Trust Society International
19. Fatima Jinnah Women University
20. National Rural Support Programme
21. Social Protection Resource Centre

Thematic poster by:
Danyal Haroon, student of computer engineering at the Lahore University of Management Sciences
Dr Jochen Hippler talking about equality and justice said that both were very important for economic progress. Discussing the pandemic, he stated that the situation was getting worse around the world while countries are trying hard to overcome from the shock. The United States of America had failed to control the pandemic while China had successfully controlled it. He emphasized that when we all talk about the pandemic, we do not talk about justice. Developed countries will get the vaccines soon while the poorer countries will get it later which is shameful for the entire world. He emphasized on the need for justice and providing vaccine and all other facilities across the world equally. Dr Hippler pointed out that more poor people had been infected and had died from this virus as compared to middle- and upper-class population. There is a need to remove the inequality gap between the rich and poor and there is also a need to treat every person equally, stressed the speaker.

Dr Hafiz Pasha said that India had been badly affected from this pandemic as compared to other Asian countries. He pointed out that for the past couple of years economic growth was decreasing even before COVID-19. The large-scale sector manufacturing industry had also observed negative growth due to which exports had decreased which is why our GDP growth is negative. Economic growth of Pakistan drastically declined in 2019 and 2020, however, the growth of remittances is positive and had increased in Pakistan even in the pandemic period. Dr Pasha mentioned that imports had also been decreasing in the last couple of months and another positive development at the balance of payment front was that our current account deficit had turned into the surplus. The production of cotton crop had decreased which is not good for agriculture sector of Pakistan. Our agriculture sector had worsened in the last couple of years and this decline in agriculture sector was due to lack of terms of trade. Due to poor performance of the agriculture sector, the economic growth of Pakistan had become negative. Dr Pasha further said that economic growth may not exceed...
from 1% in the coming years. The unemployment rate had doubled, and poverty was also increasing in Pakistan. He pointed out that the State Bank of Pakistan had played a very good role amid the pandemic. It had reduced the interest rate and provided many finance packages to firms which played a positive role in the growth of Pakistan. Ehsaas Program worked very well for lower income households. Government had succeeded in reducing current account deficit, however, in the last couple of months the net inflow of capital became the net outflow due to reasons such as lack of equity funds, etc. Only FDI grew positively during this time period. Dr Pasha also talked about the problem of debt services in Pakistan and said that there is a need to focus on all these issues especially and also improve our agriculture sector whose imports are greater than exports. He explained that there is only one option for Pakistan and that is to turn back to the IMF program which will help Pakistan to come out by all these issues.

Mr Sakib Sherani said that sometime IMF programs may not work well for economic growth because funds programs are pro-cyclical which means that these programs may cause slowdown of economic growth. He said that these programs are non-gradualist that is why they provide several shocks to the economy which takes a lot of time to recover. Mr Sherani further added that IMF programs are focused on price adjustments and withdrawal of blanket subsidies which is going to affect the society badly and there are some other issues due to which these programs may not bring forth economic growth. He explained the standard of IMF programs and the reasons due to which they are not good for economic growth. He said that business and investments in Pakistan remained low due to COVID-19 and there is a need to improve health system and expansion of social safety nets to overcome from this pandemic. He further added that Pakistan can improve its economic condition by redesigning the IMF programs such as to give allowance for heterodox policies and increased forbearance.

Dr Bushra Yasmin discussed the social security programs of Pakistan. She said that the pandemic had badly affected the education sector and female labour force participation rate which made negative impact on Pakistan’s economy. The Social Protection Program is not working well especially for poverty reduction. Dr Yasmin also emphasized on financial austerity especially in the education sector. She said that online education is not effective so far because it provides poor quality of education and the laboratory work is also not possible through this mode. She further pointed out that the real threat is to the productivity of the future human capital in the absence of provision of quality education today. She emphasized that our education sector is not much supported by social protection programs. She also described the adopted targeted short-term policies of Pakistan. She said that the government’s interventions were good, but the pandemic is harsher. She also discussed the support of IMF and World Bank to Pakistan; and the different programs of social protection which was given by the government of Pakistan in pandemic period. She said that Pakistan will need to expand welfare provision beyond cash transfers like other countries such as India and Bangladesh to overcome from this pandemic. She also recommended that government should focus on social risk management strategy and global education security while foreign investment and provision of E-infrastructure facilities are also important to boost the economic growth in Pakistan.

CONCURRENT SESSION A-2

Literature, Language and Technology in the Time of COVID-19

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<th>Chair:</th>
<th>Mr I. A. Rehman, Former Director, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Lahore, Pakistan</th>
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</table>
| Speakers: | 1. Mr Niaz Nadeem, Indus Cultural Forum (ICF), Islamabad, Pakistan  
2. Ms Nusrat Zehra, ICF, Islamabad, Pakistan  
3. Mr Raza Naem, Pakistan Progressive Writers’ Association (PWA), Lahore, Pakistan  
4. Mr Zubair Torwali, ED, Idara Baraye Taleem-o-Taraqi (IBT), Swat, Pakistan  
5. Dr Humera Ishfaq, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Panel Organisers: | Mr Ahmed Salim and Dr Humera Ishfaq, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Report by: | Palwasha, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi Dr Humera Ishfaq, |
Dr Humera Ishfaq, SDPI, Islamabad, welcomed all the participants and speakers. She introduced all the speakers one by one. She led the discussion by talking about the literature that is being produced in the times of pandemic. Technology plays a big role in such times.

The presentation was titled ‘Epidemics in Colonial and Post-Colonial South Asian Urdu Fiction’ and discussed the social and psychological effects of epidemics in Urdu literature. The literature of the 19th and 20th centuries was also highlighted. After 1857, social history also affected the literature of that time and afterwards. Deputy Nazeer Ahmad’s Taubatun-Nusooh [The Penitence of Nusooh] written in 1814 was based on the pandemic situation in which cholera killed a lot of people. The protagonist and his father also died due to this. The mental stress that the pandemic gave people is well-defined. People would be unsure about their survival. The social and mental conditions were really bad. Another work of literature, Qarranteena (Quarantine) by Bedi, discussed was also of the same nature and was based on a pandemic situation. The author talked about the impact of quarantine on people’s lives. They are not dying due to the plague but due to the environment around them. The story of Bhago is narrated that how he helped in the hospital, cleaning the streets and helping the people unbiasedly. Hassan Manzar also wrote Waba based on pandemics. The disease was tetanus and as he was a doctor by profession, he has explained it very well. She recommended the media and literary writers of the country to portray the paramedical and the janitor staff of hospitals as heroes of the nation.

Mr Raza Naeem, PWA, Lahore, talked about the effects of global pandemic on western literature. He shared a survey of selected portion of literature about epidemics. Most of it had come to us through translations. The year began when the WHO declared COVID-19 as pandemic on a global scale. He reinforced the idea that we are still reeling and the whole world is taken by surprise. We are still far away from the vaccine. He explained that how the word “novel” is attached to this outbreak. We turn to all the stories for refuge and in the hope that better days are coming. He discussed The Plague by Albert Camus. This is set in Algeria and the situation of the city of Oran is depicted.

The situation is very similar to our situation these days. The narrator analysed the psychology of the citizens under quarantine, the behaviour of bureaucrats, the monotony of “aimless days and sterile memories” and the despair of the grieving families. It is also a book about heroism even while it argues that there can be no reassuring hero in an epidemic. The real heroes in the book are ordinary citizens, the doctors, and other health workers who continue visiting the sick and tending to the dying despite the fear of their own lives. He also discussed an essay, An Appeal to Doctors Fighting the Plague by Camus and related their situation to our current pandemic situation. It is a sentiment that speaks movingly across the years to our times. He shared a few excerpts from the essay: “The most important thing is that you never be afraid.” And “The plague is born of excess. It is excess itself and has no limits.” A Journal of the Plague Year by Daniel Dafoe published in 1722 and set in 1665 was discussed by the speaker. It is also about a disease. He said that every epidemic is grim and deadly. He concluded the presentation with the translation of an Urdu poem Who Will Be Their Messiah by Kishwar Naheed.

Ms Nusrat Zehra, ICF, Islamabad, talked about the literature created in Pakistani languages amid pandemic. The genres of prose and poetry were discussed. Poetry in all languages started pouring in as it is the oldest and the fastest way of creative expression. Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Urdu, Balochi and Saraiki are the major languages of Pakistan. COVID-19 has brought lockdowns, quarantine, solitude, social distancing and death. The major themes of the poetry are love and loneliness, change, government’s response and hope. Saqib Nadeem (Urdu), Iqbal Hussain (Pashto) and Aziz Shahid (Saraiki) have talked about love and loneliness in their poems. Similarly, Samad Khan (Balochi) has made acceptance as the main theme of his poetry. Muhammad Akram Baloch (Balochi) talked about government’s response in his poetry. Sarwat Mahuddin (Punjabi), Aziz Gopang (Sindhi) and
Rehmat Shah Sayil (Pashto) made hope the main theme of their poems. Ms Nusrat Zehra reinforced the recommendation of a Balochi poet as she said that government should focus only on the health of public rather than the security of the country. She also recommended the concerned authorities to provide support for research, publications and continuation of online forums on the health of public rather than the security of the country. She also recommended the concerned authorities to provide support for research, publications and continuation of online forums.

Mr Niaz Nadeem, ICF, Islamabad, emphasised the idea of promotion of linguistic diversity through technology. COVID-19 arrived in the middle of the literary festival seasons. Many of them were held but a lot got cancelled. The lockdowns forced everyone to stay at home. The literati felt it more than anyone else. So, they started writings on COVID-19 in all major languages. Poetry dominated and diaries also became popular. Some short stories were written. Creativity always finds its way. New ways of communication were introduced. Most of the writers were unfamiliar with the online tools. Some of them had hardly heard of the name Zoom. In this way a new way of learning started. Discussions on writings based on pandemics started. Comparisons were drawn between the current and past writings. Short stories, novels and poetry started getting printed online.

Hamza Hassan Sheikh and Saleem Shehzad are some of the famous names. A new season of online festivals started. Various series of literary and cultural programs were held online. Different tools were used such as Zoom and Facebook Live. Faisalabad Literature Festival, Lahore Literature Festival, Islamabad Literature Festival, Aalmi Urdu Conference, PNCA events, PAL and many more were held. Indus Cultural Forum, Saranga and Literary Forum of North America were also organised. Translations of the related works and relating them to the present situations were focused more. He recommended the authorities to continue the patronization of online mediums to promote linguistic diversity. He also recommended private as well as government sector to do further skill development on online mediums.

Mr Zubair Torwali, ED, IBT, Swat talked about the fact that humorous and satirical literature is also being produced in this pandemic situation. He explained his participation in an international project named as Viral Languages where they shared COVID-19 awareness and people's experiences in different languages through video messages on the social forums such as YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp. They approached the people who had defeated COVID-19 from different parts of the world and shared their experiences. Some 20-25 languages were used in this. They also shared their experiences of the lockdowns and their attitudes towards them. Technology was used enthusiastically and was effective. Myths and conspiracy theories were diminished through them. They used posters approved by the government. The comic aspect was used in pictures so as to reduce the fear related to COVID-19. He recommended the future researchers to do language analysis of the videos that his team gathered from all around the world regarding their experience of the pandemic.

Mr Ahmed Salim from SDPI appreciated the efforts of all the speakers and thanked them. He said that technology is not a fashion but a need now. He appreciated the efforts of Abdul Rehman Biznori and Majeeb Lahori who worked for the literature in the past pandemics and eventually lost their lives.

Mr I. A. Rehman, former Director, HRCP, Lahore, concluded the session with his remarks. He said that a lot of work is still unseen. Everyone should be given a chance so that they can work well. Many literary creations written during this pandemic situation will come later and will add to our literature. He thanked the panellists and appreciated their efforts for a successful session.

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CONCURRENT SESSION A-3

Book Launch: Rah Guzar to Dekho by Karamat Ali

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<th>Chair:</th>
<th>Dr Mubarak Ali, Historian Activist and Scholar, Pakistan</th>
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<tr>
<td>Moderator:</td>
<td>Dr Abid Q. Suleri, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<td>Welcome Remarks:</td>
<td>Dr Syed Jaffar Ahmed, Director, Institute of Historical and Social Research (IHSR), Karachi, Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speakers:</td>
<td>1. Ms Zahida Hina, Columnist, Novelist and Dramatist, Pakistan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Dr Zafar Mirza, former Special Advisor to Prime Minister for Health, Government of Pakistan (GoP)</td>
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<td>3. Dr Pervez Tahir, Senior Political Economist, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Ms Mehnaz Rehman, Resident Director, Aurat Foundation, Pakistan</td>
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This session was dedicated to the book launch of Koi Rah Guzar to Dekho, which is a compilation of oral history in the form of interviews of Mr Karamat Ali, Founding Member, PILER, Karachi, Pakistan. It highlights his struggles for the rights of labourers, farmers, trade unions, students and democracy during the past 50 years. This book has been compiled by Dr Syed Jaffer Ahmed who heads the Institute of Historical and Social Research (IHSR). Moreover, the book narrates how the social activism against military dictatorship resulted in awareness regarding civic rights among the working class of the country. Furthermore, it discussed how Mr Karamat Ali's inclination towards left wing politics shaped his struggle for the working class during the Bhutto era.

While discussing about the book, Dr Syed Jaffer said that the concept of oral history has become quite popular nowadays and many such books are being published. However, it took many years to compile the interviews of Mr Karamat Ali in the form of a book. He added that the book is not Karamat Ali's biography, rather it is a collection of his observations of historical movements in Pakistan. However, there is a need for more of these books, because all the observations, experiences and events could not be covered in a single edition. Dr Jaffar expressed his keenness to record more of Mr Karamat Ali's interviews and compile more books on oral history.

Dr Zahida Hina, columnist, novelist and dramatist, had written two columns on appreciation of the book of Mr Karamat Ali and she stated that the book can serve as a guiding light for the new generation because nowadays, books which contain oral history are limited. Moreover, she said that people like Mr Karamat Ali, who are not in the limelight but have worked for the betterment of the working class of the country must be appreciated and acknowledged for their struggles. Dr Hina lamented that the book deserved to be launched at a larger gathering but, COVID-19 made it impossible, which is why they had to resort to a virtual launch. She further added that Mr Karamat Ali has not just struggled for Pakistanis but has also sympathised with the Bengalis, specifically after what

| 5. Mr Mohammad Tahseen, Founding Director, South Asia Partnership, Pakistan |
| 6. Mr Parvez Rahim, Consultant/Trainer, Employee Relations, Karachi, Pakistan |

**Concluding Remarks:**
Mr Karamat Ali, Founding Member, Pakistan Institute of Labour Education & Research (PILER), Karachi, Pakistan

**Panel Organiser:**
Mr Junaid Zahid, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan

**Report by:**
Zainab Naeem, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
they endured during the 1970s. Speaking about the book, Mr Pervaiz Rahim, trainer for employee relations, Karachi, appreciated the fact that Mr Karamat Ali has been quite candid and did not hide anything in this book. While talking about the struggles of Mr Karamat Ali, he highlighted the days when Mr Ali participated in the National Students Federation (NSF) meetings and used to interact with so many profound leaders as mentioned in the book. Mr Rahim continued that Mr Karamat Ali learned a great deal about the calligraphy technique from Sadequain [one of Pakistan's renowned painters]. Referring to his book review that appeared in DAWN, he said that there is no reshuffling in the book, the interviews are written as they were. He continued that since Mr Karamat Ali, has been living in Karachi for most of his life, he has written much about the city. He concluded by suggesting that since trade unions have been active since 1972 in Lahore, so he requested Mr Karamat Ali to mention about political history of Lahore in his next books. with so many profound leaders as mentioned in the book. Mr Rahim continued that Mr Karamat Ali learned a great deal about the calligraphy technique from Sadequain [one of Pakistan's renowned painters]. Referring to his book review that appeared in DAWN, he said that there is no reshuffling in the book, the interviews are written as they were. He continued that since Mr Karamat Ali, has been living in Karachi for most of his life, he has written much about the city. He concluded by suggesting that since trade unions have been active since 1972 in Lahore, so he requested Mr Karamat Ali to mention about political history of Lahore in his next books. 

Mr Mohammad Tahseen, Founding Director, South Asia Partnership, Pakistan said that details of many personalities from different eras in an easy language have been captured in Mr Karamat Ali's interviews compiled in the book, which is being sold at a fair price. He also mentioned that the title of the book is all inclusive i.e., Raah Guzar to Dekho, as it is about a struggle, which culminated in 1968, when the movement against General Ayub Khan's martial law was at its peak. Mr Tahseen highlighted how Mr Ali aptly discussed the protests of working class in Sindh, the farmers protest against Ayub Khan and how the movement was portrayed by the media and journalists. He also complimented the way Mr Ali highlighted the Landhi and Korangi struggle is simply wonderful. He concluded by suggesting that the book be translated in English language as well.

While discussing the book, Dr Zafar Mirza, former Special Advisor to Prime Minster for Health, acknowledged that the title of the book selected by the Editor is comprehensive and explains how the struggle of Mr Karamat Ali shaped his life and vision for the country. Dr Mirza said that Mr Ali's personality has been shaped by his parents' upbringing and the overall environment they provided; his parents belonged to the Shia-Sunni sect so that is how interfaith harmony was developed in his personality. Sharing insights of his personal life, Dr Mirza continued that born after four sister, Mr Ali was exposed early to the concept of women's rights and feminism and this brought up helped him put his weight behind the struggle for these rights later in life. Furthermore, Mr Ali has also considered farmers struggle an integral aspect of nation building, which is crucial for development of democracy. He did not limit his struggle for a specific segment of society, rather he understood that all segments are important, and democracy is interdependent on all segments of a society. Dr Mirza complimented that Mr Ali's grand vision is not localised rather it is global, as his struggle is not limited to Pakistan only.

Dr Zafar Mirza acknowledged the efforts of Dr Syed Jaffar for compiling the interviews of Mr Karamat Ali. He added that not just oral histories, but institutional histories must also be compiled and made available to the masses, especially to youth. He concluded by dedicating a stanza from Faiz Ahmed Faiz's poem to Mr Karamat Ali:

Ms Mehnaz Rehman, Resident Director, Aurat Foundation, Pakistan, talked about her days of friendship with Mr Karamat Ali in the 60s when they were students, and he was struggling for the rights of students and trade unions. Ms Rehman also discussed about Mr Karamat Ali’s left-wing movement and his inclination towards Marxism. She added that he was very vocal for women’s rights and struggled for them which is commendable. Also, though he was inclined towards Marxism, yet he never believed it should become a dogma, rather it should be used as a scientific tool to achieve one's goals for the supremacy of human rights. She further added that she is waiting for a complete biography of Mr Karamat Ali. While remembering his days with Mr Karamat Ali, Dr Pervez Tahir, Senior Political Economist, Islamabad, Pakistan, discussed about the struggle and how they continued their efforts despite the continuous political threat. Dr Tahir said that Mr Ali is a representative of hard-working class and has struggled for the human rights. Inspite of the struggles and efforts, in global ranking of labour rights, Pakistan ranks 127 out of 128 countries, which is alarming. He stressed that there is a need for our politicians to start thinking the same way that Mr Karamat Ali does for the working class.

Dr Mubarak Ali, Historian Activist and Scholar, Pakistan, while chairing the session, appreciated the efforts and said that the book is a good step towards producing oral histories, specifically because common people who are not literate and who have been part of the struggle, their history has not been written properly, therefore, this tradition of
writing autobiographies is very important and must continue. He opined that Mr Karamat Ali should have written this book himself. Also, while talking about the book, Dr Mubarak Ali said that the way Mr Ali has openly criticised and discussed the movements against the dictators is commendable. He further added that it is a significant achievement to get such books published because many leftist movements in the history have been ignored in the past. He believed that religion and poets are misleading Muslims, so we are unable to understand the movements and politics with logic.

He concluded by saying that movements were destroyed due to emotions, though we do not learn from history, it is duty of scholars to relieve the nation from emotionalism.

Mr Karamat Ali thanked all the speakers and SDPI for his book launch and said that oral histories should become a regular part of our society. There are so many other people who have struggled a lot but we do not know much about them so this trend of oral history should continue. For this purpose, he suggested that a common group could be formed where people from working class can discuss their experiences and efforts and their history should be documented. He shared that in the coming months, we are planning to form a United Confederation of Workers in the country and highlight their rights and ensure their participation in trade unions. He added that labour movements in South Asia needs to be united to guarantee human rights.

Dr Abid Q. Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, in his concluding remarks said that the subtitle of the book which is peace, social justice and democracy is in accordance with the SDPI’s vision statement and this is the reason SDPI selected this particular book for the launch during the Conference. He lamented that due to the ban on students’ unions, education was depoliticised due to which we are suffering from disintegration in the society because we have become dogmatic followers and have stopped thinking things through.

CONCURRENT SESSION A-4

Role of Media amidst COVID-19 Outbreak: From Pakistan and Beyond

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<th>Moderator:</th>
<th>Dr Shafqat Munir, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan</th>
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<td>Welcome Remarks:</td>
<td>Dr Syed Jaffar Ahmed, Director, Institute of Historical and Social Research (IHSR), Karachi, Pakistan</td>
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| Speakers:           | 1. Ms Asma Shirazi, AAJ TV, Pakistan  
                      | 2. Mr Ram Sharan Sedhai, Senior Media Analyst, Kathmandu, Nepal |
Dr Shafqat Munir introduced the speakers and briefed the participants about the topic. He shared some questions for the panellists to address. What role the media has been playing since the outbreak of COVID-19? Did some media channels resort to politicization of the situation and spread fake news? Was the media portrayal of the pandemic’s spread and information regarding protective measures backed by pure medical advice or otherwise? He said that health communication is a technical subject and mostly journalists are not trained in this regard. He called upon the developed countries to be inclusive and fair in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

Ms Asma Sherazi from AAJ TV highlighted that flux of misinformation during this pandemic is the main issue. Almost 42% misinformation is spread through Twitter. One of the main problems faced by mainstream media and media workers was that they were not able to physically cover the issue because of the lockdown. Criticizing the lack of coordination between the government and media organizations, she stressed the need to work together to deal with this pandemic. Economic and financial factors were affected by lockdown where many media persons lost their jobs. In this time of coronavirus, she said mental health and financial issues have been a bigger challenge globally, which media professionals faced. Media industry has flourishing during the pandemic as reporters have been using technology, which is creating good opportunities for the content writers. For professional safety, the media organizations and the government should mutually devise some SOPs until this pandemic ends. Many lives were lost in providing authentic information to the viewers, lamented the speaker.

Mr Ram Sharan Sedhai said that during this pandemic, particularly in the context of Nepal, we noticed that media houses had to take care of the physical safety of their workers. Many media houses in Nepal failed to ensure professional security. Some 800 media outlets were closed in Nepal. In this humanitarian crisis, the roles of journalists include finding, informing, regulating, recording, influencing, interacting and educating. Unfortunately, journalists failed to perform these roles during this pandemic. Whatever
information, i.e., views, reviews and interviews that were being published, should have been verified within the lines of WHO and departments concerned, which Nepalese media failed to do. Dissemination of information in nine major local languages was very effective and useful for the community which was broadcast via radio and other media channels. Another problem that the media faced was how to tackle info-demic. Facts were mixed with rumours. In Nepal, he said, media is heavily politicized. Some media houses negated whatever the government did which led to confusion among the masses. There was a confusion among the common audience whether what the media is portraying about the pandemic is right or wrong. Financial conditions put a lot of mental pressure on the journalists. These problems heavily constricted the role of journalists in this pandemic. Regarding the humanitarian aspect particularly in Nepal, he said, the journalists are not trained in emergency communication response mechanism. He stressed the need to establish an academy for the training of journalists, which the government is promising to build for better and effective reporting mechanism. Media houses and the government have to play an important role in educating the masses.

Mr Amir Zia said that this is the bright side of the pandemic that health issues were being debated in print, electronic and social media. There was a lot of sensationalism and scepticism about the virus. Media organizations were not only creating awareness but also instilling fear in people. Social media was spreading the false information widely as one-sided news stories were shared. In Pakistan, he said, only the mainstream media has played a positive role. Media in Pakistan does not focus on health issues, but this pandemic turned out to be a cornerstone focussing on health issues that generated debates and discussions. We lack journalists who are experienced in covering health issues. In the first wave, there was a lot more seriousness and media focused on performance of the Federal and provincial governments. This was because of how the governments were reacting. Pakistan's politics is quite polarized because of which the Federal Government catered a lot of criticism from the opposition. During the second wave, the political parties were more focused on the political side rather than focusing on the pandemic. Because of the political unrest in the country, media also lost its focus on pandemic. The government itself is not that much focused as it is trying to dilute the opposition's narrative.

Media houses have to develop their own SOPs and ensure that these are followed in letter and spirit. Sensitization of the masses at large is required and the government as well as the media have to play their role at large. As a journalist, it is mandatory to focus on the reporting process which should be objective and neutral. It is the duty of a journalist to focus on the public issues on the basis of merit. Low economic growth was recorded in the last few years. Revival of economy should be within the limits of defined SOPs. Ms Arifa Noor from Dawn News said we missed out the realization that times were uncertain, and policies would be changing with time during this uncertainty. As the pandemic progressed and as health advisory was issued by the WHO, we learnt a lot about it. We focused so much on the policies that we did not pay enough attention to the health aspect of the virus. Lack of awareness among the masses on how to live safely in the pandemic was missed out. There is a lot more on pandemic which we could have addressed while reporting. Media houses could have done a lot to educate its own media technical staff. Training workshops should be held to create awareness about how to deal with it safely. Media houses should rethink and revisit their priorities.

Humanitarian crisis is such that it needs to be dealt with empathy and professionalism. Pakistan's media houses have to improve the coverage of disasters. More focus should be on the empathy and professionalism while reporting. Investing on training of journalism is required in perspective of humanitarian crisis. In terms of COVID-19, more emphasis was laid on reflecting numbers rather than stories of the victims or those who have been impacted. Distrust of the people in media and government should be addressed.

Mr Joydeep Gupta said that when pandemic hit, there was a dire need of health reporters as the health segment of reporting had been neglected due to years of negligence in development journalism. For years, media houses globally could have trained and hired education reporters, health reporters and environment reporters so that they might deal with emergency situation. Media houses suddenly found that in terms of health, they had illiterate reporters, editors, and anchors. Some of them tried to educate themselves but some of them did not. Neither did we see media houses hiring any health reporters nor universities adding courses of development journalism, in particular health journalism, which itself is extremely alarming. Despite availability of SOPs by March 2020, the media persons ignored these SOPs in the field. We see a combination of ignorance and apathy which needs to be sorted out if we have to deal with this pandemic. There should be saturation coverage in the country about the pandemic which is normal and natural.

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri while summarizing the session said that the responsibility of media houses is to collect credible evidence, analysing and presenting them. It depends on how we label that information. There are several innovative ways to take our voice further, to connect it with an appropriate punch line. The moment we connected COVID-19 with economy and GDP, people would automatically start shifting their radars to the COVID-19 stories. This is what we do at SDPI, we bundle COVID-19 with economy and GDP, people would automatically start shifting their radars to the COVID-19 stories. This is what we do at SDPI, we bundle COVID-19 with economy and GDP, people would automatically start shifting their radars to the COVID-19 stories.
Ms Rabia Tabassum welcomed all the guests in the panel. Introducing the panel, she informed the audience that according to the results of a recent study of SDPI, around 46.8 million students got affected from school closures across Pakistan. The gendered implication indicates the disrupted education of around 15.97 million girls, that is, 44% of total primary and secondary level students. Existing response in the form of TV, Radio, online apps played a significant role in continuation of education during pandemic. But there are certain limitations including digital divide, gender disparity in access, possession and use of devices that may widen the existing gender gap. Currently we have 49% girls compared to the 40% boys of 5-16 years out of school in Pakistan, she said.

Highlighting the recent study of Pakistan Youth Change Advocates & Malala Fund, Ms Areebah Shahid said that the study focused COVID’s impact on girls’ education in Pakistan. For a successful policy, the collaborative efforts from all stakeholders are required for consensus and uniformity in policy actions, she stressed. For the purpose of this research, households with lower socioeconomic strata were taken as prime study. Overall, 82% of girls and 79%
of boys said that they intend to return to school when they reopen. But when they were asked how optimistic they were if they would be able to return to school, girls in most of the areas were less optimistic of returning to school than boys. The primary reasons are loss of income resources and fee affordability issue. In case of boys, some had already entered child labour because families required more earning hands and they were expected to financially contribute to their household income. The study found that many students were unable to use teleschool due to lack of understanding as the results showed that only 20% of surveyed students were using teleschool properly. The findings showed that there is lack of awareness among students and parents about the use of teleschool. Gender-responsive recovery of educational activities would require remedial learning support for marginalised girls and other vulnerable groups along with back-to-school campaigns. Revitalizing school management committees to engage households would be an important aspect of recovery strategy. She also suggested to make possible the availability of gender-disaggregated data on re-enrolment and retention for making informed decisions.

Ms Umbreen Arif said that Pakistan was already lagging in education sector, however, COVID-19 was a big blow to education sector, and it has impacted all sorts of institutions including vocational, technical, madressa, universities, colleges and schools. She summarized the discussion that despite the adverse impact as shared earlier, there were a few important takeaways from what has happened during COVID-19 emergency. She said that one of most amazing things that happened was the provincial consensus. During this emergency it had been realized that Pakistan needs a coordinated and national consensus for decision making in education sector. This narrative building after consensus helped us in uniformly formulating and implementing policies about school closure, promotion of children to the next grade, school reopening and exams.

She also said that the Government needs to continue education development through focus on technological means. She highlighted that we have some national educational tech sector partners who came up with video lessons for E Taleem Digital portal along with radio school which has helped millions of children. She said that there was an amazing policy response from the Government for successfully developing distance education wing and now the process of digitization of education is moving towards the right all vulnerable children, back in the classroom
direction. It has brought education vulnerabilities into policy discussion frequently. She said that it is important to hold research and collect data to improve the education and find ways to improve the enrolment of children in schools.

Ms Wajeeha Bajwa expressed her views on “Exploring the efficacy of digital education and tele-education on girls schooling in Pakistan during COVID pandemic”. She said that digital divide was also prevalent before pandemic and Pakistan faces serious challenges regarding digital education during pandemic. Based on the study results she stressed that the Government needs to take steps to move towards successful model of digital education at all levels of education to use more interactive approaches for providing digital education and improve communication among the relevant stakeholders. She recommended to address infrastructural constraints and promote partnerships to map and develop virtual educational capacities.

Ms Fajer Rabia Pasha highlighted the inequalities in the education system especially for girls. She emphasised the importance of short-term and long-term education plans. With short-term-plan we need to focus on the use of technology by overcoming all the challenges on ground. Using local resources, community mobilization, and community-based teachers, we can address the challenges faced in the education sector, she said. It is also important to address the challenges related to internet provision and structural issues. Further, the Government needs to introduce policy interventions that are cost effective. She said that in the long run, the Government needs to find ways to address the food security challenges which has a direct impact on the education of girls. Actions to overcome the mental health barriers in education should also be focused.

Dr Fouzia Khan said that it is important for the Government to intervene in the education sector especially focusing on directing funding to relevant areas and regulating the provision of digital services. It is important for the Government to focus on governance mechanisms and regulating effectively as there is no guarantee that education market will provide equitable access to educational opportunities. It is also essential to ensure through financial incentives that girls, who are most vulnerable for being pulled out of school due to income losses and early marriages, continue their education. In addition to the financial support, communities and schools should make targeted efforts to get girls and ultimately,
Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri said that there are two major considerations behind setting Pakistan’s agenda for social protection. The first is “gap in coverage, adequacy and comprehensiveness of provision of social protection, both pre- and post-COVID-19”, and the second is “gap in delivery and implementation mechanisms”.

Ms Ingrid Christensen said: “The aim of this session is to advocate for and promote social protection in Pakistan.” She said that social protection agenda is not only something to bring out when there is a crisis, rather it must be a long-term policy agenda for a sustainable livelihood of people. Global importance of social security and inclusive development of a society is widely recognized. It is a key to alleviate poverty as part of an active labour market policy.

Social protection can contribute to economic growth, promote human development, protect people against losses due to crisis and is essential for country’s political stability and peace. Access to social protection is recognized as basic human right, as it is included in Sustainable Development Goals under target: “leave no one behind”. Large gaps are seen in people’s access to social protection. According to the World’s Social Protection Report 2017-19, released by the ILO, only 29% of the world’s population has adequate social security coverage and more than half of the population have no coverage at all. Coverage gaps are typically associated with under-investment in social protection, increasing informality and lack of good governance. The importance of social protection is also underpinned by international labour
standards, including the Social Security Minimum Standards since 1952. The Newer Recommendations on social protection 2012 provide guidance to countries. However, Pakistan is not bound to implement their principles as it has not ratified the convention 102. Social protection in Pakistan is also identified as a priority in the UN’s Sustainable Development Framework 2018-2022 to assist people in need. Ehsas programme focuses areas like labour protection, etc., which is worth mentioning. However, she emphasized that employee social security institutes, acts, schemes, workers welfare funds, old age benefits, etc., are not reaching out to the labour.

She said that universal social protection (USP) means everybody is adequately protected against the full range of risks throughout the life. USP encompasses three aspects:

- Universal coverage
- Comprehensive protection in terms of risk covered
- Adequacy of protection provided

In Pakistan, the coverage and adequacy are improving. Pakistan needs to have its own systems and schemes in place for an efficient coverage to reach the people in need. Ms Mariko Ouchi said that Universal Social Protection is a basic human right and an investment with high returns in economic and social development. USP is “a nationally defined system of policies and programs that provides equitable access to all people and protect them throughout their lives against poverty and risks to their livelihood and wellbeing”.

Only 45% of the world population has access to any form of social protection and only 29% is covered by comprehensive social security systems throughout their lifecycle. Only 10 years are left to achieve the UN agenda 2030 or SDGs, including Target 1.3, i.e., ending poverty in all its forms everywhere by setting up and implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all. Pakistan has ratified only one convention of International labour Standards, i.e., C118 (equality of treatment, social security) maternity and work injury. Pakistan has less than 20% effective social protection coverage against total population which is very less. Effective coverage can be increased by increasing public spending. Extension of coverage should be a priority particularly for COVID-19 response.

Dr Faisal Rifaq said that good health is essential to sustain economic and social development for poverty reduction efforts made by any government. People need to be protected from being pushed into poverty because of cost of health care, which is accelerating every day. Universal health coverage ensures that all people have access to needed health care services, including prevention, promotion, treatment rehabilitation, palliative services in sufficient quantity to be effective. Universal health coverage has become a major goal for health reforms in Pakistan. Pakistan is making efforts to provide universal health coverage to people. The Sehat Sahulat Program is funded and supported by the Federal, provincial, and regional governments, starting from benefiting families below the poverty line to the universalization of services. Currently, the program is focusing on indoor health care services, which is expanding in other areas. Threshold of poverty has raised due to COVID-19, so more families are to be included in social health protection initiative. Keeping the SDG targets, Federal and provincial governments are working to

include more services along with indoor health care service. COVID-19 has given a lot of opportunity to learn and plan on how the Government of Pakistan should provide services so that no family goes the below poverty line because of catastrophic health expenditures. According to the National Health Vision of Pakistan, “all families regardless of poverty should have a financial health protection by 2026”.

Mr Lire Ersado said that Pakistan has an urgent need for financing health and education programs to provide universal coverage. COVID-19 has made it clear that there is a need for multi sectoral approach and stronger coordination between the Federal and provincial governments.

Mr Haris Gazdar said that Pakistan has bare-bones of a universal social protection system, which was established over a decade ago in the form of Benazir Income Support Program. There were several important accomplishments to date with plenty of challenges. The main accomplishments were targeting from a well-defined universe, delinking social protection from employment, increase in scale with respect to fiscal outlay, women as primary beneficiaries, key partnerships between NADRA and payment agencies (banks).

He further said that social protection should not only include food security as a priority but also economic vulnerability. He stressed the need to re-establish clearer linkage with livelihoods. Dynamic social registry with a rights base approach and self-targeting is needed. Under the current system, the Federal Government enjoys taxation powers across a range of relatively higher yielding heads of tax, but its performance in tax collection heads has been poor. Provincial governments have performed better, but until there is a major change in the tax mandates. The Federal Government will continue to have the fiscal resources for social protection. There is also a strong rationale for the Federal Government to lead in redistributive transfers, particularly because a whole range of untargeted subsidies are already rooted through federal tier. Over the longer term, the future of social protection is closely tied up with tax performance and reforms.
INAUGURAL PLENARY

Sustainable Development in Times of COVID-19

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<th>Moderator:</th>
<th>Dr Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</th>
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<td>Welcome Remarks:</td>
<td>Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairman BoG, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introductory Remarks:</td>
<td>Dr Abid Q. Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<td>Special Remarks:</td>
<td>Mr Vladimir Norov, Secretary-General, Shanghai Cooperation Organization</td>
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<td>About SDC Anthology &amp; SDPI Journal</td>
<td>Ms Uzma T. Haroon, Director SDC, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>About Vice Chancellors’ Consortium</td>
<td>Mr Shahid Minhas, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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| Launch of SDPI’s Publications: | • 22nd Conference's Anthology: Sustainable Development in a Digital Society  
• Poisons in Our Environment by Dr Mahmood A. Khwaja |
| Plenary Organisers:         | Mr Hassan Murtaza and Mr Shahid Minhas, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Report by:                  | Nageen Sohail, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan |

Mr Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairperson, Board of Governors, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) welcomed the august participants, partners and dignitaries who joined the Twenty-third Sustainable Development Conference through virtual media due to COVID-19. He highlighted the role of SDPI to attain sustainable development by providing evidence-based research amidst this pandemic. He said that SDPI recognizes its value as an independent think tank by providing services in policy formulation and policy analysis impartial of any political affiliation. SDPI bridges the gap among South Asian countries by initiating and participating in bilateral and multilateral dialogues.

Mr Kakakhel emphasized the aim of SDC which is to invite civil society, human rights organizations, parliamentarians, academia, and public and private organizations to exchange views upon critical hurdles in achieving peace, justice, and sustainable human development in compliance to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While talking about the theme of SDC 2020, Mr Kakakhel said that panels focusing on natural and human-initiated disasters, climate change, food security, diplomacy, human rights, poverty, entrepreneurship, etc., were being organised. They have been organized to ensure cross-regional contributions to avert crude impacts of COVID-19 on human lives.

While referring to the economic development, food supply chains, and normal healthcare activities have been disrupted due to this pandemic. International and multinational communities have responded to their economic disparities; however, the situation is critical in developing countries.
While talking about human losses in the healthcare sector due to COVID-19, Mr. Kakakhel suggested private pharmaceutical companies to invest more in developing vaccines for this pandemic. He appreciated the role of the Government of Pakistan and provincial governments who tackled this situation in compliance with national interests. He also appreciated support programs like the Benazir Income Support Program which continues to provide its support to needy people in difficult times.

While elaborating on the theme of Sustainable Development Conference (SDC) “Sustainable Development in the Times of Covid-19”, Dr. Abid Qayyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, said that the idea of the virtual conference is quite pertinent as it provides participant countries an opportunity to share intelligence and knowledge during COVID-19. This virtual conference includes forty-five sessions consisting of 9 plenary sessions and 36 concurrent panels with 246 panellists participating from 26 countries. While answering the question regarding changes and transition over the years in SDC,

Dr. Suleri said that SDPI is the largest think tank working on sustainable development in South Asia where the transdisciplinary team of SDPI has been focusing on showcasing quality research solutions for social protection, SMEs, food security, etc. While talking about theme of the previous Twenty-second SDC, “Sustainable Development in Age of Digital Transformation”, Dr. Suleri said that digital transformation is an essential part of life in the response to COVID-19 as most of the businesses, schools, offices, and meetings have been carried out virtually throughout the year. Dr. Suleri acclaimed the role of the National Coordination Committee (NCC) and its operational arm, National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) for their strategy to fight COVID-19.

Dr. Suleri highlighted that the positive and negative impacts of a pandemic depend on the resilience, technological advancement, and preparedness of a country. Highlighting the negative impacts of COVID-19 on the socio-economic and health conditions of the people, Dr. Suleri said that gender inequality, unemployment, children out of virtual classrooms due to lack of internet facilities, gender-based violence, inequality for women, food security, lack of healthcare facilities, lack of safe drinking water facilities and access to sanitation have been observed during both the waves of COVID-19. Panels in SDC have been designed to address all these issues, he added.

Dr. Suleri emphasized focusing on the positive aspects of this pandemic in our lives. He said that now countries with compromised development budget on social protection, healthcare sector, poverty alleviation, and education are investing more in human social systems. COVID-19 also helped us to improve the quality of the environment by lowering air emissions and water effluents due to low economic activities.

Dr. Suleri suggested the countries with low development budgets should take monetary funds and grants to improve social, health, and education infrastructure in the countries. He also suggested quick digitalization of economic trade routes in terms of textile and exports to overcome the loss to this pandemic. He further suggested analysing the effects of COVID-19 in the long run to monitor our response and preparedness for future consequences of the post-COVID-19 world.

Honourable guest, Mr. Vladimir Norov, Secretary General, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) delivered special remarks at the Inaugural Plenary of SDC. While expressing his gratitude towards SDPI for inviting him to be a part of this conference, Mr. Norov said that the theme of SDC during COVID-19 is a great learning opportunity for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during the pandemic. He also appreciated the role of SDPI in highlighting social issues and their meaningful input for achieving SDGs in South Asia.-19.

He further recommended struggling economies of South Asia increase investments in the latest technologies and digital tools to reinforce multilateral trade routes and economic conditions of the South Asian region. He advised them to act upon the SCO Development strategy 2025 to recover economic losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He recommended Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to endorse in cross border e-commerce and digital economic ventures to promote their products and services in the post-COVID-19 era. Two publications were launched during the Inaugural Plenary including the SDC Anthology titled “Sustainable Development in a Digital Society”; and, a book on “Poisons in our Environment”.

Mr. Norov said that COVID-19 has brought various opportunities for growth around the world. Accelerated digital transformation in social and economic forums has helped to increase global sales and the job market for the people, he added. He said that the digital economy is playing an important role for achieving sustainable economies, increasing competitiveness of economies, and improving the quality of life of the people.

Mr. Norov appreciated the united response and mutual connection of South Asian countries towards COVID-19 despite their differences. He emphasized strengthening multilateral trade routes among SCO member states which are viable economic opportunities for the struggling economies. Mr. Norov suggested the governments of developing countries and their economic advisors explore virtual opportunities for digital transformation in social, health, and economic sectors during COVID.
Ms Uzma T. Haroon, Director SDC Unit, SDPI, talked about the research and publications by SDPI during COVID-19 during the launching of the latest SDC anthology titled “Sustainable Development in a Digital Society” based on peer review papers presented at the previous SDC. She announced that authors are given the choice to submit their papers to the anthology or the annual Journal of Development Policy, Research & Practice.

She shared the review process of the Journal, and the thematic areas of the chapters. She said that research work from SDPI is important for research institutions, academia, students, and policymakers. She also thanked the donors, knowledge partners and stakeholders for their continuous support for the SDC. While introducing the book on “Poisons in our Environment”, Dr Vaqar Ahmed said that the policy recommendations have been designed after careful analysis of data collected through field surveys, sample collection and assessment, and detailed review.

Mr Shahid Minhas, Training Manager of Centre for Learning and Development, SDPI, talked about challenges of virtual education and its challenges in developing countries.

He said that education in Pakistan has suffered a lot due to lack of technology. We aim to bridge this gap by promoting academic research between think tanks, national universities, and policy institutions, he stated. He thanked all the partner universities for their support in imparting quality education during COVID-19.

**CONCURRENT SESSION A-7**

The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Higher Education: Challenges and Way Forward

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<th>Chair:</th>
<th>Dr Shaista Sohail, Executive Director, Higher Education Commission (HEC), Islamabad</th>
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<tr>
<td>Keynote Speaker:</td>
<td>Mr Haroon Sharif, Former Minister of State and Former Chairman, Board of Investment, Government of Pakistan</td>
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<td>Moderator:</td>
<td>Dr Saima Hamid, Vice-Chancellor, Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), Rawalpindi, Pakistan</td>
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| Speakers:          | 1. Ms Rita Bruun Akhtar, Executive Director, United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP), Pakistan  
                     2. Mr Amir Ramzan, Country Director, British Council, Pakistan  
                     3. Dr Atta Ullah Shah, Vice-Chancellor, Karakoram International University, Gilgit-Baltistan |
| Discussant:        | Sadia Ziafat and Arsalan Ahmed Raja, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad |
| Panel Organisers:  | Dr Fareeha Armughan, Mr Shahid Minhas, and Ms Ayesha Imran, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Report by:         | Nudrat Fatima, FJWU, Rawalpindi; and Nadia Khan, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |

Research & News Bulletin
Dr. Shaista Sohail highlighted that the HEC is currently faced with four challenges that include e-learning system, capacity building of faculty, poor internet connectivity, and uneven provision of IT services across the country. However, she said, HEC has worked hard to minimize the academic disruption during the pandemic and guided the higher education sector how to continue with the semesters and examinations. Convocations were also held on time, she added. She further said that there is a need to adopt two modes of delivery: synchronous learning and asynchronous learning. Integrating technology into education in a positive manner promotes a more diverse learning environment and paves the way for students to learn the technology as well as their common assignments. HEC provided the guidance material to universities and the higher educational institutions for an online methodology to ensure quality being not compromised.

Mr. Haroon Sharif, while talking about private-sector financial investment and creative potential for digital content making and collaborations, said that for the development and economic growth of Pakistan, human capital is extremely critical. The COVID-19 impact has multiplied the pressures on the fiscal side which were already there due to twin deficits in our budgetary system. Thus, higher education must focus on the skill development of students. Job creation is another challenge faced by Pakistan. He added that the government must come up with an incentive framework that can sustain educational institutions. He concluded that the public and private sectors must be engaged together for an effective and efficient learning and budget maintenance. He also highlighted the need for a policy enabling higher education to borrow from central bank on near-zero interest rates.

Ms. Rita Akhtar threw light on the mobility and health issues of international students. Presenting a current and future outlook, she said that the USEFP has recruited 150 Fulbright students already and there will be no change in the future due to several reasons such as policies. These scholarships are for real socioeconomic development as most students serve after getting degrees. She said that the USEFP has maintained a 50% regional quota for girls that helped reduced gender gaps. She hoped that students will be able to go abroad in the next semester, however they will continue to receive the stipends in their home country.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali tapped upon the challenges and opportunities that arise from the transition of physical to digital or virtual education. He stated that the HEC is playing a positive role in overcoming hurdles and maximizing opportunities.

The content is modified for virtual education which is following the hybrid learning models. He also encouraged the adaptation of all public and private educational institutes to the new normal of online/digitalized learning and skill development. Moreover, the industry-university linkage needs to be strengthened and funding must be provided by the government to carry out this effort. Engagement of corporate sector into this model would increase the chances of success.

Dr. Attaullah Shah, sharing his concerns about the health of students, said that four committees were established under his command to ensure safety in hostels and homes. In addition, a mass awareness campaign is being carried out in all departments of the university. He appreciated the HEC for providing the LMS. This system indeed is very interactive and responsive. The biggest challenge faced by Karakoram University was the unavailability of the internet in the villages where students reside. In response to this, 40 internet facility centres in 10 districts of Gilgit-Baltistan have been established, hard copies of condensed lectures have been prepared, and memory stacks have been distributed among students. He said at least 70% students are satisfied and happy with the system now. At the end of term, teachers’ assessments will also be carried out. He further discussed the financial crisis in the universities and urged authorities to broaden the revenue stream of universities. The panel proposed the following key recommendations:

- There is a need to bring regulatory changes required for opening up the landscape of innovative channels of financing for the education sector.
- The government of Pakistan needs to come up with policy incentives, a strong regulatory structure and ensure the availability of favourable financing for the education sector. A critical pre-requisite will be to strengthen the internet bandwidth capacity, digital networks like television and access to mobile phones and tablets.
- It is critical that governments may explore new approaches to financing quality higher education, such as private sector partnerships, giving public higher education institutions greater autonomy and more responsibility for raising funds, and developing their capacity to manage their financial affairs.
- In the case of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), a sustainable solution involves shifting the role of skills training from the government to the private sector while strengthening the public sector’s role in regulating TVET.
- The Ministry of Education and Professional Training should facilitate the partnerships among financial sector, technology platforms, and educational institutions to expand the network of quality education through affordable digital means.
- For the effective virtual learning, institutes must train students as well as teachers.
Welcoming the speakers, panellists and guests, the moderator, Dr Imran Saqib Khalid, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan, said that the issue of climate change was integral for not only the world but also for Pakistan which is one of the most affected countries by climate change in the world.

Ms Sobiah Becker, FCDO, Islamabad, Pakistan, said that the fight against climate change is an uphill battle. We had a beautiful world consisting of flora, fauna and animal species and we alone are responsible for its destruction. We destroyed our own home (earth) and we are getting towards a point where we will not be able to survive it. About 50% of the forests have been destroyed and species have been lost, pointed out the speaker.

Mr Harjeet Singh, Global Climate Lead, ActionAid, New Delhi, India, highlighted the fact that the current climate crisis is not because of developing countries but because of elites (developed nations) and they are responsible for it. Developed nations greatly emphasized on mitigation and all climate debate is structured around it because these developed nations came much later in climate negotiation. So, we need to raise and represent the voices of marginalized communities at the international forums because climate change is a matter of global justice.

Dr Adil Najam, Inaugural Dean, Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies, Boston University, USA, said that we cannot ignore the ecological and the climate challenges. He highlighted that developed countries needed to play an enhanced role in taking forward the climate agenda. We need to understand that human well-being is integral to our response to the climate crisis, he cautioned.

Dr Imran Khalid next asked the participants about the reasons for lack of ambition despite having a climate agreement in place. Ms Sobia Becker said that the Paris Agreement frames the need of actions for global community. But it is the
individual actions that casket up to bigger ambitions that we need in order to have a better future. She stressed on three important points: respecting as well as preserving the environment; taking tangible steps to protect the climate leading to reduction in carbon or environmental footprints and living within our means; and, acting responsibly so that we can gain what we have lost. Sadly, we are still away far from our targets even after five years of Paris Agreement, she pointed out. Under the current policy scenario, if things keep progressing in the same manner then global warming will increase by 2.9 Celsius degrees. The conversation around climate change needs to be more of a proactive one, she stressed.

Mr Hassaan Sipra said that the US is now in a transition phase with the Biden presidency, so it is hoped that something could be done from their side as well. On a global scale, he talked about Chinese who had set some clear targets during President Xi Jinping’s regime in terms of ecological civilizational development. He stressed that the way Paris Agreement was structured by keeping between 1.5 to 2 Celsius degrees was a political decision. He cautioned that an increase in temperature has a massive distortionary impact for Hindu Kush Himalaya For example and the Third Pole gives water to two-quarter population of the world. Remaining between 1.5 and 2 Celsius degrees is therefore necessary in the long run. As far as Pakistan is concerned, a higher ambition just like what Prime Minister Imran Khan’s Government is doing, is needed, he emphasized.

Addressing the same question, Mr Harjeet Singh said that people are already suffering across the world. The living space on small islands is shrinking and there are millions of people who are facing the disasters one after the other. They did not have the resources and capacity to recover from the previous one while the one hitting them next is much harder and taking away all the resources and pushing them backwards by decades.

He further cautioned that we are in a very bad condition. He added that there are 100 companies who are responsible of above 71% emissions in the world. There are some elite countries who have been controlling the emissions and they are the ones responsible and funding the science denialism. According to the Emissions Gap Report, we have are not being a success. In 2015, the Paris Agreement was made which sadly has no commitment whatsoever. He concluded that we should get away from emissions and onto projections. We should not look for what we will have to do in the future but what we have actually done. He further stated that when climate impacts come, poorest people will always have to adapt because they have the least resources. Smog policy in Lahore, water policy, etc., come under adaptation policy.

Mr Harjeet Singh agreed with the points raised by Dr Adil Najam earlier and added that it is important for us to reflect how we are so late and why this is happening. We look up on climate negotiation as an environmental agenda and ignored the fact that it is more about economics and trade. They do not move forward because they know that they have to make deep cuts. If we look at the data available for the last 30 years, the emissions have increased by 99%.

Answering a question about adaptation, Dr Adil Najam said that we are already in the age of adaptation. Poor people have to adapt because it is a law of nature as they have less resources or low capacity to fight with it.

He emphasized that we have to bear the impacts of climate change which cannot stop. Even if we start mitigation, impacts will be the same and we cannot change them entirely. So, we only need to adapt. We have to put all climate change and its impact on our agenda, then our policy response ought to be what do we do about it. He emphasized the need to make our adaptation a sustainable climate resilience policy. He concluded by highlighting how our water and energy policies need to be in line with the
Ms Maryam Shabbir, SDPI, Pakistan, welcomed all the speakers and participants. She shared the results of a research conducted in 2020 and stated that COVID-19 has reduced the air emissions and has improved the air quality. She also stated that nitrogen dioxide pollution has been reduced by 40% across China and 20-39% across Europe and the USA according to Geophysical Union in 2020. Another research study showed that lockdowns in Europe have played an important role in reducing mortality rate caused by air pollution with 11,000 fewer deaths in the region.

Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel concluded the session with a thank you note to all the panellists and also agreed with their points of view. At the end he hoped that we can find the solutions to all these serious problems. The Paris Agreement was a compromise where we have left certain loopholes behind which hopefully can be plugged automatically. He said that climate change is a real challenge, it cannot be ignored, and we need to address it for our upcoming generations.

CONCURRENT SESSION A-9

COVID-19: Air Quality and Health Issues

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<th>Chair:</th>
<th>Ms Farzana Altaf Shah, DG Environmental Protection Agency, Islamabad, Pakistan</th>
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<tr>
<td>Speakers:</td>
<td>1. Dr Gabriel Filippelli, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), Indianapolis, USA</td>
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<td>2. Mr Abid Omar, Pakistan Air Quality Initiative, Karachi, Pakistan</td>
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<td>3. Ms Bharati Chaturvedi, Director, Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group (ERAG), New Delhi, India</td>
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<td>Concluding Remarks:</td>
<td>Dr Abid Q. Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<td>Panel Organisers:</td>
<td>Ms Maryam Shabbir and Ms Khansa Naeem, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<td>Report by:</td>
<td>Amna Rasheed, Fatimah Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan</td>
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Ms Maryam Shabbir, SDPI, Pakistan, welcomed all the speakers and participants. She shared the results of a research conducted in 2020 and stated that COVID-19 has reduced the air emissions and has improved the air quality. She also stated that nitrogen dioxide pollution has been reduced by 40% across China and 20-39% across Europe and the USA according to Geophysical Union in 2020. Another research study showed that lockdowns in Europe have played an important role in reducing mortality rate caused by air pollution with 11,000 fewer deaths in the region.

Mr Abid Omar, Pakistan Air Quality Initiative, Karachi, started his discussion by stating that he will focus more on solutions. He talked about the impacts of COVID-19 and health impacts of air pollution. According to a research that has been coming up since the pandemic started, one of the primary vectors of transmission of the virus is airborne transmission especially in places like Pakistan which has very elevated levels of air pollution of particulate matter. It means that you would be much more susceptible to this virus.

She introduced all the speakers afterwards.
There is a conception that Pakistan though has been very lucky and in spite of the very high levels of air pollution, the pandemic is not as bad in Pakistan as it is in some other parts of the world. He illustrated through a chart that the daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases in Pakistan are much lower than many other parts of the world but more important is the case of fatality rate that is 2% higher in Pakistan and is very similar to the global average and in fact it is even slightly higher than the fatality rate in the United States. So the picture for the pandemic is not as rosy as it may appear in the media. He also shared another chart that illustrated the role of air pollution in this crisis of COVID-19 and on which there is not enough research. According to the WHO standards, air pollution remained above safe limits, especially in Lahore, keeping in mind that there was a lot of reduction in pollution due to lockdowns. From 1 January 2020 till 12 December 2020, the US Consulate reported that average levels in Lahore were 10 times above safe limits and same is the case in other cities as well. The key message is that Pakistan needs a lot of efforts to improve its monitoring. In November 2019, Prime Minister Imran Khan had announced a number of initiatives including improving fuel quality, an electrical vehicle policy, upgrading brick kilns and as of 2020 a lot of those policies have come into place. In the last week there was a new announcement of “no new coal power projects” and “60% renewables by 2030”. Some policies have been partially executed as well. The results will be important because blue skies and clean air are a barometer of good governance. We need to learn from our neighbours like China how to clean our air Pakistan needs to work on policies regarding industry, agriculture, transportation and urban waste supported by air quality monitoring. He recommended the researchers to do more research regarding air quality in Pakistan. Pakistan's Government data regarding air quality should be station-specific with coordinates, it should be real-time data and should have programmatic access. He also recommended that the government should check on industrial emissions. He said that the authorities need to manage urban waste and dispose it off safely. Crop-residue should be managed by strict bans on open burning of crops. In the transportation sector, there needs to be improved fuel emission standards and inspection of vehicles needs to be done regularly. He also emphasized on crop-burning alternates, brick kiln upgrades and urban forestry initiatives need to be taken. He recommended the education sector to improve education on air pollution. Government and researchers should be empowered in their efforts. He recommended the concerned authorities to establish emission control zones. Some 135,000 people die due to air pollution in Pakistan every year so serious steps are needed to be taken, he emphasized.

Ms Bharati Chaturvedi, Director, Chintan ERAG, New Delhi, started her presentation by saying that there is “No vaccine for air pollution”. Some 78% of deaths due to COVID-19 in Italy, France and Spain were in the highly polluted areas. The studies of Harvard and Beijing Universities also linked them to a long-term exposure to polluted air. Most of the cities in the top 17 cities with the worst air in South Asia are in Pakistan and India. In South Asia, the exposure of workers and daily wagers is more to the polluted air as they work in open places. Moreover, in these countries there are a lot of issues related to health, poor infrastructure and poor housing system for the workers. So, their vulnerability is very high. Air pollution is such an issue which was present before COVID-19 and will continue afterwards. If we look at this century we can come up with other pandemics as well such as SARS in 2003, H1N1 Influenza in 2009, Ebola in 2015 and now this COVID-19, so this is a century of more pandemics. She talked about the plans as in the case of Bhopal and other cities of the country. NCAP (Indian National Clean Air Programme) is working on the issue and has 4,711 action plans. She suggested that we can tackle air pollution with respect to this pandemic by clinical intervention, mitigation of key sources of air pollution, and strategic public-private partnerships. Some 40% waste is burned, and we are breathing its smoke directly. She also mentioned that from November to February, 30,000 fires are burnt by the security guards who are night watching. The construction debris is also poorly recycled. She recommended that researchers need to desegregate the data and look at it. We should put to use more public transportation and de-motorize private transportation, e.g., travel via bicycles. Industries should consider clean production and clean processes. The researcher should also count in the local pollution producing sources while gathering data. She recommended the construction department to recycle the construction debris. Information about air quality needs to be made public. She recommended the authorities to opt for real-time monitoring. She urged that researchers need to look at inclusive and equitable data to solve the problem of air pollution. She ended the discussion by saying, “Focus not just on particles, but people.”

Dr Gabriel Filippelli, CUH, IUPUI, Indianapolis, stated that we need to be aware of the ingredients that are contributing to the pandemic and get ahead of them. The population is more vulnerable to it. He highlighted the inflammatory disorder in respiratory system due to air quality. The virus pre-set our lungs for the response. If we control this, we will be able to make it less deadly. He mentioned that there is a significant reduction in air pollution in the USA due to the lockdowns. The NO2 emission has dropped by 40-45% in the US during the pandemic situation keeping in mind the fact that all the industries were not shutdown. The whole system needs to transform instead of individuals. He appreciated the active monitoring of air pollution in the USA and the fact that the data is public. He urged the need for action instead of speaking. We know the emissions and the sources of NO2 but there is a need to transform the way we produce electricity and use transport, he stressed.

Ms Farzana Altaf Shah, DG-EPA, Islamabad, stated that policy gives us direction but there is no clear policy about health issues due to air quality. We need to have a holistic approach towards this. There is no clear, transparent, persistent and scientific data about air pollution, so it is a challenge for us. Due to our lack of awareness, we correlate the flu and infections to our weather conditions. During pandemic, the use of mask has protected people from the poor quality air. She talked about the Clean and Green Pakistan Programme by Prime Minister Imran Khan. It aims to provide clean water, air, and the management and burning of solid waste. Currently,
the most effective tool is the clean city index. She also emphasised the need of sharing authorized data. The Climate Change Policy 2020 is working on smart agriculture approach. Incentives are given to the farmers not to follow waste burning and other harmful activities. Some 500 brick kiln units have been converted according to this policy. She recommended that authorities need to establish a surveillance system where we can link the air quality with the health of our people. She concluded the discussion by saying that there is still a long way to go. We need to learn from the countries who have achieved clean air quality. “Nature does respond to our wrong doings.”

Dr Abid Q. Suleri, ED, SDPI, Islamabad, concluded the session by thanking all the speakers and urging the need for taking air pollution seriously. He said that it is not only affecting our health but also our economy and social life. It is not only disrupting our flights but was also disrupting children’s education in the form of smog. He said that this issue in the presence of COVID-19 requires collective wisdom. Both the governments of India and Pakistan need to join hands and come up with a joint plan in order to clean our air. He said that clean air is our children’s right.

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**Planetary Dialogue Plenary:**
**The Future of Sustainable Development in #Worldaftercorona**

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<tr>
<th>Host:</th>
<th>Dr Adil Najam, Inaugural Dean, Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies, Boston University (BU), USA</th>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Ms Alice Ruhweza, Africa Regional Director, WWF International</td>
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<td>3. Prof. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Professor, The New School, New York; &amp; former Director UNDP Human Development Report Office, New York, USA</td>
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<td>4. Dr Sunita Narain, Founder &amp; Director General, Center for Science and Environment (CSE), India; &amp; Editor Down to Earth Magazine</td>
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<td>Plenary Organisers:</td>
<td>Ms Sahar Basharat, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan and the Pardee Center at Boston University, USA</td>
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<td>Report by:</td>
<td>Sadia Munir Cheema, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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**LIVE Sustainable Development in the Times of COVID-19**

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**Research & News Bulletin**
Ms Sahar Basharat, on behalf of SDPI-BU, USA welcomed the esteemed panellists joining from Africa, Ecuador, India and New York, and all the participants from across the world. She introduced the host Dr Adil Najam, Inaugural Dean, Pardee School of Center, Boston University, USA, and handed over to him to proceed with the Plenary.

Dr Adil Najam, hosting the Plenary introduced the panel having a lifetime experience, passion and ideas on sustainable development. He gave his introductory remarks on the subject and threw some questions for the conversation. Where is sustainable development today and where is it likely to be in the world the coronavirus is creating? How is COVID-19 going to impact us? Do we need to put more attention on the global issues to handle the global crises or have we learnt that we are not very good at global cooperation? He emphasized that we should give more attention to the ongoing pandemic and observed that we are not very good at global cooperation. In March 2020, he shared that we interviewed 101 global thought leaders across the world on what the world after coronavirus might look like. They responded that coronavirus would affect food security, put the ultimate burden on increasing poverty and inequality, there would be unavailability of water. He further said that globally, solidarity has become weaker and cooperation between international communities is not strong enough due to the absence of global leadership. Sustainable development is about making issues real and we as activists and scholars can translate these ideas into actual activity whether it is with food waste, garments, or livelihoods, he stressed.

Ms Yolanda Kakabadse described that we are not explaining to people the meaning in the language they can understand. There is a very exclusive group who knows what is happening and can visualize the future and understand these processes because they are educated in that field. But the rest of the world has no idea what we are talking about. Even a layperson or an uneducated person does not know climate change or cannot explain the simple word such as diversity. With COVID-19, people are now able to understand the relationship between ecosystems and the health of the planet, not by using those terms but by identifying deteriorated land next to each other, or due to the environment in which citizens live. By delivering the message in a simpler language with simpler vocabulary can bring people together and make them understand the COVID-19 situation. She further said that ecosystems in Latin America have highly deteriorated due to excessive food production which goes to waste.

A very small issue has large implications. The positive impact of COVID-19 is that this exchange of vocabulary and event is reaching hundreds of people. Now thousands of people are taking part in listening, learning and discussing something that they have never had access to. COVID-19 has allowed us the discovery and rediscovery of the connectivity between rural and urban people, between food as well as food wastage. It is due to the awareness about food wastage that the UK has reduced 27% wastage of food in the past year. Another positive impact is that it enhances the interconnectivity. It has led to solidarity between people, nations and the planet. However, among global communities, the solidarity is absent because of the absence of global leaders. We have also discovered that we are not prepared for the future risks. Governments need to prepare our institutions and minds to deal with the new mess in a much better way than how we have addressed these crises. She said that there is a fear of slowing down the process due to the lack of ability of science into policy and recommended that we urgently need to invest in the new profession that is interpreters of science and should reduce the gap and vacuum.

Ms Alice Ruhweza said that ‘where we are and where we want to be, depends upon where we were in the first place’ There are three things: the pre-COVID state; how the impacts of COVID impacted you; and what measures have you put into place? It can be seen that in the pre-COVID state, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) showing were showing long time negative trends on poverty, inequality, food security, malnutrition, climate change, and loss of nature. In the current COVID-19 state, we are in the same state and going downwards because global output is shrinking, global poverty has grown, and people are facing inequality as well as job losses. The future trends only depend upon the past trends. COVID has a positive impact on the system and it gave us an opportunity to take a critical look at all our systems. In African countries, we are reconvening the leadership, many job opportunities for youth have been created, and renewable energy is being made. On the other hand, supply chains have been broken with COVID-19. Government should focus on traditional food production and reduce the dependency on polluted fertilizers. Another positive opportunity is that the infrastructure has made growth. There is a dire need to bring things that are accessible to everyone because everyone cannot understand everything, so language is an important part to describe things in a simpler way. It is an important part to report and to understand the COVID-19 and climate change nexus and we should be focused on human management not on molecule management. The whole world can recover if everything is accessible to everyone. She said that sustainable development always starts and ends with people and it is a social contract. The hope is youth because they are awake, more productive than anyone and ready to lead. Government should focus on facilitating the youth to bring more productivity.

Prof. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr emphasized that inequality is preventing the achievement of the SDGs. The ongoing pandemic is fracturing the society locally, nationally as well as globally. Due to the pandemic, millions of people have lost their jobs and livelihood. We have recognized this problem, but nothing is actually being done about it. The international community has to deal with the longer-term development of social, economic, and environmental sustainability consequences of this pandemic. It is a tragic situation of collective failure. COVID-19 has upended all assumptions about the different ways in which countries can tackle the crises. This pandemic has hit high-income countries more severely in terms of mortality rates than low-income. African countries have remarkably low mortality rates as well as while Asians have also done very well.
Developing countries are going to be very hard hit by the economic fallout of the pandemic. Through the severe impact of COVID-19, the relations amongst countries will change in the international communities and they will have to rearrange themselves to find the leadership necessary to tackle these problems. There is a systemic problem globally because pandemic is coming to a world of hyper globalization and finance capitalism. At the grassroots, people are showing solidarity and care, but at the top level, national leadership and business community have no commitment towards universalism and humanity. Global economy works in such a way that wealth brings wealth. According to the rules of international agreements regarding trade and investment, there is a need to focus on economic models to reverse the inequalities and give back democracy not only in the political but in the economic sphere. Sustainability is not just an environment but also economic and social. This pandemic really hit the workers more than the shareholders. There is no way that individuals can solve all their problems on their own, but we do need these alliances of workers and collective efforts to renegotiate these terms.

Dr Sunita Narain talked about the very confounding time in the world because everything that is happening, is also not happening. We have to understand how complicated the world is today. On the one hand, we have seen disruption like never before. This kind of disruption makes the world stand up and think how interdependent and interconnected we are. And get the world leaders to work together whether it is on COVID-19, vaccines, or understanding if the poor in the world will not get the vaccine and services, the world will remain vulnerable. But we do not see it as happening. On the other hand, the same thing is with sustainable development like we have local crises of air pollution and the impacts of climate change that are hurting us today. Poor are not the only ones being affected, but the rich world is also being affected by climate change. The action is happening across the world, but the point is that we still do not have the imagination, courage and boldness to take the kind of actions needed to be taken in a phase of calamity.

There are opportunities that have a disproportionate impact on the poor, also lessons that we have to learn in the subcontinent and take it forward. In COVID-19, there have been massive migrations from the cities back to the villages because of a complete collapse of livelihood with no option but to go back to their villages. Every rural agrarian becomes distressed with this situation and climate change impacts are making it worse. The fact is whether it is a climate change or air pollution crisis, the root is in the global production systems which have been designed to discount the cost of labour and the cost of the environment. There is a need to reduce the cost of production through the cost of the environment. There is an opportunity to reinvent rural resilience and rebuild conditions in which they migrate only if they want. Labour has become scarce in urban areas. Government also needs to keep reinvesting in the environment and in labour to build a more well-being economy.

Dr Sunita Narain said that we are not creating good leadership across the countries and that is why democracy is getting weaker and hollow. A good leadership should be helpful to discourse the COVID-19 pandemic.

Democracy today is becoming a latest idea and project and we need to be concerned about it to address the global crises. We should engage every decision we take to understand how we can do things better and then practice on the ground and stand behind the solutions. Push, kick, shout and do whatever it takes but get it happen, she emphasized while concluding her recommendations.

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**CONCURRENT SESSION B-1**

**Government of Tomorrow: Reimagining the Role of Government after COVID-19**

*In collaboration with United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)*

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<th>Moderator:</th>
<th>Dr Hamza Ali Malik, Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division, UNESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand</th>
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| Distinguished Speakers: | 1. Dr Abid Q. Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad  
2. Dr Dushni Weerakon, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Sri Lanka  
3. Dr Fahmida Khatun, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh |
| Panel Organisers: | Dr Sajid Amin Javed and Dr Fareeha Armughan, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |
Dr Hamza Ali Malik, presenting a retrospective of the last several months which the government spent in fight against COVID-19, said it is safe to say that the debate between the role of state in running the affairs of the country, particularly the economy, is getting settled. The governments’ proactive role is perceived with much more clarity now that the focus has so far been on enabling the economies to perform. Priority is now being given to real economic issues such as provision of decent jobs, poverty alleviation, and redressal of inequalities as opposed to making mere tweaks in the economy to control issues like inflation. Therefore, the governments are now required to sit back and adopt a passive role – whether pertaining to job issues, the continuity of market and fiscal policy, which has become more pronounced as opposed to the monetary policy. The monetary policy, which has acquired a more supportive role, cannot work in isolation; the idea is to enable the continuity of the economy smoothly. Dr Malik said the developing countries are faced with a host of challenges such as inept healthcare systems, climate change, etc., which have been exacerbated due to the pandemic. He stressed the need for an integrated government-society approach and multilateralism to cope with diverse issues that span over traditional silos of social, economic, and environmental pillars.

Dr Fahmida Khatun emphasized the role of state as the lead innovator setting the scene for all citizens. Some of the important points that came under discussion were: the governments’ capacity to exercise these notions in South Asia; the tenacity and intellectual responsiveness of the government officials; and the extent to which both the government and its officials are going to be influenced by the global context. The issue of climate change is particularly neglected in South Asian countries despite the fact that they are at the receiving end. SDGs are still at the heart of economic goals, aligned with the sectoral goals. However, she said, COVID-19 has emphasized upon green economic recovery, so the governments have taken fiscal measures that ignored environmental aspect. The current situation emphasized on the role of government on the green economy rather than focusing on high growth numbers because growth numbers like GDP is not a measure of people’s welfare. She said that South Asian countries should refrain themselves from giving financial excuses while incorporating the issue of climate change in policy making as governments have taken stimulus packages in the form of fiscal policies, but environment is mostly neglected in these policies. In case of any disaster or resource shortage, the government’s initial targets are to keep people afloat.

Dr Dushni Weerakoon embarked upon an integrated society which, she said, is needed more than ever. Pointing out flaws in the system, she said, in current pandemic, a number of steps were taken, and various task forces were created to deal with the situation, but institutionalization of such task forces is required to deal with any such future disaster. The general perception is that there is a lack of government integration in South Asian countries. Consequently, the public no longer trusts the governments because they do not exactly know who stands to gain what. It is more important to see as to how the government addresses the segmentation. She suggested that countries must be prepared to meet similar pandemic situations in the future by institutionalizing the recovery process, especially in terms of disaster management frameworks. Over the last two to three decades, there has been a lot of change in Sri Lanka’s economic reform process. Since then, no other South Asian country has managed to undertake the same uprooting. In retrospect of the tensions of political party systems, bureaucracy has been politicized. A lot of outsiders are coming into aid the government, but they eventually leave and there is no institutionalization of such intervention. She suggested the coordination between health and other sectors as well as an overall abridgement of the state in terms of trust and accountability.

Dr Abid Q. Suleri said communication creates incentives for people through transparency of government policies and effectiveness of bureaucracy.
Leadership, transparency, and preparedness is required to implement the policies. In retrospect of COVID-19, he said, if the governments for all sorts of deficit maintain a fiscal expansion by borrowing, the process would do more damage than it had before. Therefore, a clarity and alignment between the key institutions (ministries of finance, planning, industries, commerce) and departmental linkages is important, without which the government cannot come up with a recipe for revival. Leadership, transparency, and preparedness to implement the policies as well as a better coordination between the monetary and fiscal policies may all be essential components to achieve a synergy.

Dr Shafqat Munir, while opening the discussion, said that religious beliefs and ethnicity are linked to violent extremism and Pakistan is engaged in building counter strategies for peace and harmony. He urged the experts to opine on the state of violent extremism in Pakistan, its impact on community resilience, marginalized groups and minorities, its push and pull factors for countering violent extremism, involvement of government and civil society, and the role of social activists and philanthropists in supporting communities facing violent extremism and religious discrimination.

Ms Sehrish Qayyum said that security focus policies have shifted to health emergency domains through lockdowns and work halts. She said that shifting trend in community monitoring and regulation has been observed which may help identify reasons behind the possibility of violent extremism in the society and may later help curb them schematically, but little negligence will exacerbate the crisis. She highlighted that the Government has tried to limit the negative impact of lockdown by formulating a tiger force, emergency programs, National Command and Operating Centre (NCOC) and suspending PSL matches.
Discussing the challenges to community resilience imposed by religious groups, she said about 27% of the COVID cases were linked to the individuals who had attended social events organized by religious groups of almost 250,000 individuals. She attributed the psychological impact and online radicalization to COVID crisis. The worldwide set of SOPs during pandemic that physical distancing leads to negative introversion and monotonous added to the crisis in anxiety. Alternatively, stagflation is another reason, which is reinforcing violent extremism during COVID crisis due to the unemployment and inflation, organizational economic stress, social and domestic pressure has encouraged the probability of negative cash and flux. Ms Qayyum added that psychological counselling, e-learning, and enhanced working opportunities should be introduced in this pandemic period which can reduce violent extremism.

Dr Musferah Mehfooz said that scholars present the Holy verses without their conceptual and underlining meanings with the claim that this pandemic is a divine punishment to humanity. While doing so, they do not consider the contagious nature of this disease and history of pandemics. She added that radicalism and being judgmental has done more harm to the Muslims today. False religious beliefs are major hindrances towards the actual understanding of contagious nature of the disease, she said. Furthermore, she emphasized that many scholars blame Chinese for this virus due to their dependence on animals as food sources, neglecting the fact that they are consuming it since centuries. These wrong interpretations and misguidance by religious scholars are responsible for the extremist attitudes of their followers, she added. Radical approaches should be adopted to create peace and harmony in the environment.

Dr Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi present his discussion on three aspects which are: shifting trend, conspiracy theory and government-public relations. He said that traditional security would be responsible for defending borders, but now it has jumped into domestic security and comprehensive security as the new normal has completely changed. He added that the combination of informal and traditional security has led to the formation of NCOC in Pakistan. The US, a model state of the world, has failed to deal with this pandemic as they characterized this pandemic as a Chinese virus rather than taking concrete steps to save nation resulting in infection transmission in 100,000 people per day. American attitude has disappointed the entire world, he added. He mentioned that China and New Zealand showed responsible behaviour in dealing with the virus and have produced vaccines against it. The conspiracy theory about COVID-19 propagated by religious clergy in the beginning of the disease died before our eyes, he argued. Moreover, during this pandemic, the government and public formulated and maintained their close relationship to address the present global crisis. Crime rate like looting, mugging, and theft was quite less during this pandemic, but domestic violence increased exponentially.

Dr Soherwordi raised a fact that COVID-19 has suspended the life making people anti-social, which has resulted in increased violent extremism as terrorists are known for their anti-social behaviours because they kept themselves isolated from the outer world. Health hazards are also arising due to inactivity and lack of exercises.

Dr Farhan Zahid said despite frustration due to COVID-19, the rate of terrorist activities decreased in 2020. In 2019, the number of reported terrorist attacks was 482 while it had decreased to 280 at the end of 2020. He attributed this decline to the lockdown situation. Moreover, terrorists shifted their targets from public to law-enforcement and security forces as change in their strategic policy to attack on soft corners. Furthermore, a number of initiatives were taken during this pandemic to choke the financing of terror organizations both at regional and local level which was another reason behind decline in terrorist activities. Continued tactical measures, formulation of grant strategies to counter violent extremism, enforcement of counter extremism policy guidelines formulated by National Counter Terrorism Authority Headquarters (NACTA), and implementation of national internal security policy 2018 is the need of hour, he added.

Dr Muhammad Makki highlighted the emerging scenarios that international and national government where they are focusing on health, economic and terror issues to combat the pandemic crisis. Major trend that was observed during this pandemic is a strange silence or the sense of loss and confusion within the community of CVE. People are trying to figure out what will happen in the future to the momentum secured by governments and organizations working with the community to build community resilience. There is a need to recognize the fact that threat of violent extremism had intensified because of COVID-19. Practitioners and scholars demand the focus on two main fronts such as having renewed attention to renew the frame of violent extremism in the context of COVID-19 while practices and initiatives should be sustained in this pandemic. As socio-psychological impacts are concerned, people have been observed to be disconnected from the outer world and as life got suspended. Furthermore, the world is moving to eco-chambers, therefore, further the impacts of online radicalization on psychological conditions are producing lone wolves. Moreover, more research work is needed to collect data on this issue to tackle the problem efficiently. To a question, Dr Makki replied that intrastate conflicts had merged after the post-cold world war when the clear shift in the anatomy of war or conflicts from interstate to intrastate was observed, whereas it is linked to change in global power structures. With the passage of time, as the societies are evolving, we have seen various ethno-religious identities framed within the societies. These identities have intensified the intrastate conflicts. To another question, he said that Paigham-e Pakistan is not a narrative it is busy in re-enforcing the identities, which is one of the reasons behind creating extremism in the society. So, there is a need to know what is our narrative towards extremism, how to construct it and what should be its key components?
Dr Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, welcomed the chair, panellists and audience to the online panel discussion on “Getting SDGs Back on Track, Innovative Solutions for Post Pandemic”.

The session was chaired and moderated by Dr Khaqan Hassan Najeeb, Former Advisor to Ministry of Finance and Executive Director General of Implementation & Economic Reforms Unit. In his remarks, Dr Najeeb said, the world was going through COVID-19 pandemic, which was a health crisis that had turned into a human crisis. During this pandemic we have seen poverty worsen, equity has been affected in terms of domestic resource mobilization, financing needs, while almost all issues have worsened as compared to a pre-pandemic time. Dr Najeeb said that we need a global response as we have seen in the case of G20 where we have seen some debt relief for the developing world. We require the academics to work with think tanks and pitch ideas and policy recommendations to the government which are applicable to the current situation.

Ms Onyinye Ough, Executive Director, Step Up for Social Development and Empowerment in Nigeria, Nigeria, said that procurement frauds have been attributed with the contributors when it came to the issue of access to water. Ms Ough said that wearing masks as a preventive measure to avoid the spread of virus is a crucial component of procurement process. She continued that in Nigeria it was alleged that the Federal Ministry of Health spent about USD 96,000 to procure 1,808 face masks, which means the government bought them medical equipment should have a strategic plan in place where we could use this as an opportunity to strategically build something rather than just responding to a crisis.
In conclusion he added that remittance is also a revenue source for the country which has also been negatively impacted by the COVID-19, this also needs to be noticed at the governmental level.

Syed Muhammad Mustafa, Senior Technical Advisor, The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ,) Pakistan, said, social assistance is essentially a program or an intervention which provides a minimum income support to those living in poverty. He added, expansion of social assistance can be seen through two lenses, it can either be seen as an attempt to catch more people who have fallen into poverty or it can be seen as a government or a taxpayer-funded unemployment programme. The third benefit of a social assistance programme is that it enables injecting a lot of money into the economy and helps to stimulate it.

Continuing Syed Mustafa said that Pakistan's response to the pandemic especially in social assistance, was recognized worldwide because of the different tools that we use such as social registry and social profiling which allowed for a sanity check to rationalize the total number of eligible people to be benefited. He highlighted that the computerized national identity card system in Pakistan is advantageous to track and target the poor people. This smart card can be used to find out the eligibility status of a person for social assistance. He also mentioned that Pakistan's response to the pandemic was further limited due to lack of trust between the state and the citizen, the government and the people, relying on property registries, census numbers, property documents and the payment transfer mechanisms. He suggested that the government institutions should internalize different technologies and use them effectively.

Mr Ali Salman, Founder and Managing Trustee, PRIME and Chief Executive Officer, Islam and Liberty Network, Pakistan said, we need to look more towards the local issues and adopt our strategies according to what needs to be done. It was reported that government of Pakistan had USD 150 million Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focus fund, which has not been spent. Mr Salman added, we need resources to be spent wisely and there should be a structure and financial mechanism in place to cater to the financial issues.

Mr Salman concluded by pointing out that there were three possible transformations, which think tanks should experience or may be experiencing already. The first transformation should be the resources which have been available for think tanks in our countries. Funding from the rich countries would be reduced as the demand for those resources within the donor countries will increase to meet the health crisis of the domestic population. It means the think tanks working in Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh and India would need to look more domestically for resources. Second, the think tank model needs transformation from a traditional project proposal to more specialization and more programme-based orientation. Most of the think tanks write proposals, get funds and then execute in specific projects. He emphasized that it was necessary for think tanks to keep the changing global scenario in mind and VV generate more indigenous resources rather than depending on international resources/funding. The third transformation the think tanks need to go is from an advocacy to problem solving strategy.

Dr Zubair Iqbal Ghouri, Chief Executive Officer, TRA Associates; & Former Member, Planning Commission, GoP said that the issues we are facing in academia during the COVID-19 environment were particularly from the lens of gender. We have been trying to cope with these problems but limited resources and of course the lack of training, lack of capacity and lack of human resource are straining our efforts. Beside technology and financial constraints, there is lack of leadership in the academia and administration. Female representation is missing at the senior leadership and due to these issues, we are unable to solve their problems. Dr Ghouri lamented that the people running the administrative affairs lack capacity, knowledge and skills.

The environment of the classrooms is different than online teaching. Many of the teachers feel challenged when it comes to using technology, using papers or the board and reading them out loud is one of many issues that has drastically impacted the quality of education. Dr Ghouri said that the issues we are facing in academia during the pandemic times and the G20 debt relief certainly gives us a lot of room over here. They have been open to extension lately but then again this calls for more innovative fundraising platform. He said that in the coming days, it is likely that donor funding may diminish even further, and we will have to find out resources within our own country to execute development programs. Dr Ahmed said that it is a very recent phenomena that the business associations in Pakistan have started finding value in what think tanks do and we see Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) and business council now reaching out to think tanks to find out a common space in policy, advocacy and outreach. He added that it is a welcoming change but think tanks themselves need to understand that their independence should not be tarnished in the medium to longer term.
The moderator, Ms Shandana Khan commenced the session by introducing the chair and the prestigious panellists. She outlined the session’s objective which was to focus on the contributions of different Rural Support Programs (RSPs) across the country. She gave a brief about RSPN which is the largest development network of Pakistan and covers almost 149 districts. She also stressed on building partnerships between government and the organizations and develop mechanisms to fight catastrophes.

Chair of the session, Dr Pervez Tahir, former Chief Economist, Planning Commission of Pakistan, delivered special remarks on the importance of the rural communities and called them the most sustainable aspect of our economy. He stated that the government does not have any mechanism to reach the rural communities, even in emergency situations. So, there must be proper legislation and channel to mitigate disasters at the rural level. A community activist from NRSP, Ms Shabana Iftikhar comprehensively shared her contributions to the community, along with her team members. Rural communities were and are being helped in numerous ways including provision of small loans to the women, so they could start their own business.
She added that vaccination was also provided to the people at the village level. In addition, testing of water bodies was done to ensure safe drinking water. For solid waste management, dustbins had been installed at small distances. She added that the introduction of kitchen gardening and local park are under process.

While highlighting the condition of pandemic, Ms Iftekhar said that several measures had been taken by her team to spread awareness and reduce the infection. Three women visited 15 houses per day to educate the locals and encouraged them to follow Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Brochures were also distributed in the community along with 200 ration bags. Hundreds of people were registered with the Ehsaas Program for financial support. Furthermore, 2,000 masks were prepared by the residents for enough availability. She added that people were trained to prepare their own masks and social distancing was also taught and practiced during the meetings and prayers. She stated that she is passionate to contribute more, but due to shortage of the funds, it is not feasible.

CEO of BRSP, Mr Nadir Gul Barech highlighted the condition of rural communities of Balochistan and the contribution of BRSP. He said that due to the terrain, communities face many natural disasters including earthquakes, droughts, floods, and oil spillage. So, they have now become very resilient. Even during the lockdown due to pandemic, the organization worked to rescue the people.

While highlighting the struggles of BRSP, Mr Barech stated that during COVID-19 situation, BRSP engaged all the community institutions for capacity building. Different strategies were adopted to educate the communities regarding preventive measures of COVID-19 spread. Discussing the spread of virus, he said that due to less population density in the province, the infection was mainly confined to urban areas. While stressing on water, sanitation and hygiene, he mentioned that BRSP launched a campaign for handwashing and placed 500 handwashing places across the province. He also accentuated the economic benefits of smart lockdowns especially in the rural areas.

Discussing the challenges during COVID-19 pandemic, Mr Barech stated that the first challenge was to understand the situation because of no prior knowledge. Second challenge was related to the communication and transportation of teams. Third challenge included the economic impacts due to lockdown, for which available grant was utilized and people were also linked to the Ehsaas Program. Another challenge in rural communities was of COVID-19 testing due to inaccessible transport and lack of quarantine centres. While talking about psycho-social support in rural communities, he added that BRSP has hired psychologists in four districts of the province particularly dealing with women’s issues including but not limited to gender-based violence.

Mr Barech gave some practical implications and suggested the federal and provincial governments should conduct Disaster Risk Assessment to identify risk-prone areas and devise strategies accordingly. Comprehensive data and suitable mechanisms will help reduce the severity of disasters. He added that different organizations must be linked to work synergistically against COVID-19 and other issues in rural areas. Regional Program Manager NRSP, Mr Tariq Nazir, initiated his discussion from the meeting of NRSP with National Command Operation Centre (NCOC) after which initiatives were taken to mitigate the problems related to ongoing pandemic in the Union Councils of Islamabad. He added that 105 women activists from rural areas were trained to educate their communities, which resulted in a fewer number of COVID-19 patients in villages unlike cities. He admired the hard work of RSPs and further spotlighted their efforts by stating that they have the potential to work efficiently with minimum resources.

While answering a question about the impacts of lockdown on field work in communities, he said that there was not much impact except for microcredit. All the activities continued on ground. Door-to-door awareness of communities and meetings of activists and staff were regular following SOPs.

Dr Rashid Bajwa from NRSP focused on the partnerships of all the stakeholders for the prosperity of rural areas. He initiated his discussion by introducing NRSP and its mechanism of working throughout the country. While talking about the role of RSPs during COVID-19 pandemic, he stated that it was more or less the same throughout the country. He discussed the Water, Immunization, Sanitation and Education (WISE) Program of NRSP, due to which several rural communities were already aware and easily adopted prevention strategies to avoid the disease. He recommended the government to formally collaborate with the available network of RSPs to develop the rural communities in a sustainable way. Discussing the structure of NCOC, he admired the involvement of all provinces. According to him, the only remaining hurdle was the psychological barrier which is lack of willingness to work. He stated that there was a need for practical implementation rather than just making policies. He added that RSPs should not depend on donors and work independently. He suggested to have a connection between policy makers and the organizations, so that the real problems and their potential solutions can be highlighted.

While answering a question about psycho-social issues during pandemic, Dr Bajwa said that unfortunately, no considerable work had been done up till now. He stated that specialists were required for face-to-face counselling of people which is not the current agenda of RSPs. While answering another question about coronavirus vaccine and its availability in rural areas, Dr Bajwa explained that transportation of vaccine is not feasible due to cold chain, so it should only be made available in capitals and divisional headquarters.
CONCURRENT SESSION B-5

Accelerating SDGs Achievement and Building Back Better from COVID-19

Chair: Mr Riaz Fatyana, Member National Assembly, Convener National Parliamentary Taskforce on SDGs

Moderator: Dr Nagesh Kumar, Head, UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office, New Delhi, India; and Dr Rajan Ratna, UNESCAP-SSWA New Delhi, India

Guest of Honour: Ms Romina Khurshid, MNA, Member Parliamentary Taskforce on SDGs, GoP

Speakers:
1. Dr Abid Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad
2. Mr Nazir Kabiri, Executive Director, Biruni Institute (BI), Afghanistan
3. Dr Fahmida Khatun, Executive Director, Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka, Bangladesh
4. Prof. Dr Sachin Chaturvedi, DG, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi, India
5. Dr Posh Raj Pandey, Executive Chairman, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Kathmandu, Nepal
6. Dr Dushni Weerakoon, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Colombo, Sri Lanka

Panel Organisers: Dr Rajan Ratna, UNESCAP-SSWA New Delhi, India; Mr Ahad Nazir and Mr Abdullah Khalid, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan

Report by: Sadia Ziafati and Arsalan Ahmed Raja, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad, Pakistan
Dr Abid Suleri and Dr Nagesh Kumar welcomed all the guests in the panel. Dr Nagesh Kumar introduced the topic and highlighted that SDGs agenda is about people, so it is important for the elected representatives to close development gaps especially after COVID-19. He said that South Asia entered the pandemic with low level of preparedness and in particular the slow progress on SDGs so the situation exposed the gaps in public health infrastructure, universal social protection, provision of basic amenities such as sanitation, and lack of technology and lack of progress in ICTs. The pandemic had severe consequences for the South Asian countries’ economies. The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), backbone of all South Asian countries’ economy, has been badly affected leading to loss of jobs and international trade.

Dr Rajan Ratna while moderating the session highlighted that the national strategies for recovery need to focus on building back better by not going back to the status quo agenda but instead towards an inclusive, sustainable and resilient futuristic agenda and plan. The regional cooperation platforms whether in the framework of SAARC or others for bilateral cooperation can play an important role in complementing the national strategies towards rebuilding the economy. There is a lot of unutilized potential for collaboration especially on the fronts of vaccine development, provision and trade of medical supplies which could prove critical for combating COVID-19.

Ms Romina Khurshid Alam said that it is important for SDGs’ platform to work actively in the situation of crisis for building back economy after the pandemic and to deal effectively with challenges like climate change. She said that members of the parliament of each country can play a huge role, but regional partnerships and cooperation can bring bigger impact. She suggested that during the pandemic, the parliaments of South Asian countries can collaborate virtually to hold dialogue, form consensus, formulate and implement policies to move effectively towards rebuilding economy and achieving the SDGs.

Mr Nazir Kabiri highlighted the situation of Afghanistan after the outbreak of COVID-19 and what lies ahead in terms of challenges for a country like Afghanistan whose economy has been fragile even before the pandemic. He said that the GDP growth averaged around less than 3% after the combined impact of declining grants and increasing political instability while COVID-19 has further plunged the economy into a deep recession. He said that the domestic and external financing for SDGs already fell short of expectations prior to pandemic and it is important to bridge the financing gaps for achieving SDGs in post-COVID situation. He said that COVID-19 is a great opportunity to revisit the policy structures and evaluate effectiveness of international aid to make required modifications in development policies and programs. He recommended that governments of South Asian countries need to instigate on developing integrated approach for financing economic interventions and public-private partnerships for bringing the desired change. Further he said that the governments should focus on designing and implementing business reforms strategy especially focusing on capital policy and management interventions.

Dr Fahmida Khatoon highlighted the fact that the special challenges for South Asian countries’ economies will rise as they try to move from predominantly agriculture economies towards manufacturing and services sector. She said that despite the benefits of this economic growth there are limitations which include the quality of growth as it is not inclusive and beneficial for everyone. In case of Bangladesh, 40% of labour force is engaged in agriculture sector as the manufacturing sector has not been able to create enough jobs. The share of services sector in GDP has increased but the scale of services sector has not improved in Bangladesh and other South Asian countries. She suggested that it is important to look out for means and policy interventions to scale up services sector and the countries should focus on quality of growth. She said that technology interventions are important for South Asian countries to boost their economy. For health and education policies, it is important to revisit and revise the policies and improve regional cooperation to achieve the desired outcomes.

Prof. Dr Sachin Chaturvedi highlighted the importance of enhancing production capacity to improve the
economy. He said that the South Asian countries have done well in dealing with the pandemic despite fiscal constraints and macroeconomic challenges. He gave the example of India which is producing medical personal protection equipment (PPE) each day and it has built its capacity to 780,000 ventilators from 19,000 in March. He said that it is important to take the actions decided in the UN summit 2020 regarding climate change and abide by the Paris Agreement commitments and ensure decarbonization. He said that solar energy is also an important dimension for investment to build sustainable economy. He highlighted the importance of accelerating the digital transformation process and building E-Commerce platforms using artificial intelligence, big data, IOT and other tools to improve the macro and micro economic growth.

Dr Posh Raj Pandey highlighted the situation of economy of Nepal after pandemic broke out. Due to COVID-19, the tough policy interventions including smart and complete lockdown have been introduced, which affected both demand and supply side of economy constraining the ability of people to work and firms to produce resulting in rising unemployment. He said that COVID-19 has exposed the health capacity of countries and it is important for South Asian countries to strengthen our public health system. Further COVID-19 has provided opportunity to build economy better by adopting new ways of interaction between state, market and citizens. The sharing of knowledge and skills between the South Asian countries in areas of digital technology and E-Commerce can boost our economies.

Dr Abid Suleri highlighted that the goal of the Sustainable Development Conference is to assess the positive solutions to deal with negative impact of COVID-19 and move closer towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. He said that the silver lining of the current challenge due to pandemic is that it has actually brought back social sector development as priority for the policy makers, not only for Pakistan but for the whole region. It is important that governments focus their attention towards social sector to overcome poverty, food insecurity, gender inequality, lack of water and sanitation, poor health and education facilities. This is the time for countries to measure growth not just through macro indicators but instead the yardstick for measuring performance should be how much a government is spending on social sector and improving the standard of living of masses.

Dr Dushni Weerakoon highlighted that most of the countries are cash trapped and face additional challenges in terms of reduced funding available after pandemic. It is important to find new sources of funding for vaccinations and other related expenditures to deal effectively with pandemic and to build economy. Governments are under pressure to show that they have tackled COVID-19 and one of the indicators is how fast economy is going to rebound from the pandemic. He said that the role of regional cooperation should help governments to get the economic recovery process working smoothly.

Mr Riaz Fatyana as chairperson of the session thanked the panellists, audience and SDPI for conducting this virtual e-conference session on an important topic related to SDGs and building back the economy. He suggested that all countries of South Asia should work together to find out ways to deal with the social, economic and political challenges posed due to COVID-19. He concluded the session by expressing hope that Pakistan looks forward to connecting with its regional partners to ensure the implementation of SDGs and fighting back the major challenges due to COVID-19 in order to strive smoothly towards achievement of sustainable socio-economic development.
Brigadier Mohammad Yasin (Retired), Senior Advisor for Capacity Building, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, while moderating the panel said that with its mass destruction and economic rout, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about technological transformation in every walk of life. Technology has never been used before at such a massive scale to keep people engaged and updated regarding the hovering threats and counter measures being taken to eradicate the harmful effects of this virus. ICTs have positively impacted healthcare, education, E-commerce and the governance systems. If ever there were any doubts about the criticality of ICTs for the nation, the horrific pandemic has laid such doubts to rest. One shudders to think if Pakistan had been at the same level of tele-density (3%) as it was in the nineties, what would have been our fate during the present catastrophe. However, alarm bells are still ringing because we continue to rank below all our neighbours except Afghanistan in almost every international ICT Index. For internet penetration, un-served and underserved areas of the country must receive urgent attention of the government.

Dr Shaheen Sardar Ali, Rector, National Academy of Higher Education, Islamabad, said that these are strange and uncertain times, which are eerie and almost surreal. As human beings and creatures of habit, the COVID-19 pandemic has shaken us out of familiar ways of doing things. Having to completely transition to online education is a journey into the unknown for students, teachers, universities and the society at large. This requires policy role and capacity building in “doing by learning”, providing equal opportunities to internet access for all the students and teachers across the country, training teachers in online teaching and developing courses for learning and development. Dr Ali remarked that fortunately, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan is aware of these problems and is trying to keep pace with the challenges of...
virtual education. She added that women who are part of faculty programmes are forced to work from home, which is an additional burden to balance work and household chores, with very little support. Dr Ali said that the trials and tribulations of the education sector are not divorced from the wider society; unsure of what may happen while fighting an invisible adversary is the common denominator that unites all of us as communities. But we also share aspirations for a healthier, happier and a better post-COVID-19 world. She concluded by saying that the demand of students for quality education provides this very opportunity. Let us seize the moment and join in the perseverance of a better world.

Mr Parvez Iftikhar Member, Prime Minister's Task Force on ICTs, Islamabad said that during the COVID-19 crisis, ICT enabled the global economies to keep working (albeit at a slower pace), students could keep learning online, the sick could avoid hospitals and still get treated, professionals could work from home, businesses could have their conferences virtually, and so on. Post COVID-19, online working and learning is expected to continue; and online businesses are expected to have an even bigger market. Mr Iftikhar said that soon 5G is going to make the internet even more resilient. Against this backdrop, there are huge opportunities for Pakistan. But so are the challenges. Internet penetration in Pakistan is under 40% (according to Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), with almost 98% relying on low quality wireless broadband (3G/4G) because less than 10% radio stations are connected via optic fibre cables. Pakistan ranks 104 out of 121 countries on Network Readiness Index (2019) and 153 out of 193 countries on United Nations E-Government Survey 2020 - in both cases, it is behind its peers in the region. In 'Telecommunication Infrastructure Index' of the same United Nations (UN) report, Pakistan (Index: 0.2437) ranks below all of its neighbours with the exception of Afghanistan. We are behind every country in our region except Nepal and Myanmar. COVID-19 has shown that a high speed and large capacity internet is a must to keep moving the wheels of economy, health, education and other sectors of life. Only the fibre optic infrastructure can meet these demands, which unfortunately, Pakistan is lacking at the moment. Mr Parvez Iftikhar concluded by strongly recommending that the government must build fibre optic infrastructure with private sector ownership. This should be done in collaboration with both the provincial and local governments.

Dr Faisal Haq Shaheen, Senior Lecturer, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada, while discussing the success factors for implementing ICTs in large organizations in response to COVID-19 said that COVID-19 has taken a lot of our systems by storm and it has pushed us from desktop pandemic planning into a very real and a very moving moment-to-moment existence where the expectations of public have really surpassed the system capabilities we had on hand and what we were capable of providing. Speaking about his experience of Municipal Department Toronto, he said that if you are in a city what you want to do is make sure that service delivery is maintained and that your assets are performing and your resources in your staff are engaged and responding accordingly to demands. ICT in this regard, increasingly now means mobile map-based information and decision-making. The tool has to be easy to use; out of box; [with] minimal configuration.

The ICT technology is now central to how we engage with public. In Canada, we are buying large enterprise solutions commercial off-the-shelf technology using out-of-box technology which is really readily available and not tinkering with it too much before we implement it. This is the sort of trend right now. Technology strategy has really infused new public management thinking, which means privatisation of public services in the way of thinking. The government at the federal and provincial level and even at the municipal level should be concerned primarily with data utility, making data open to the public and then making sure that information is integrated in project management. In enterprise project management, as far as ICT is concerned, we need to put the end user in front, you cannot build solutions in a bubble. One needs to map out project timelines; with software developers and software providers, you balance with implementers, local practitioners, local consultants and you involve people who carry knowledge of the local environment.
Dr Faisal Haq Shaheen stressed that you have to engage people first then develop the process and later bring in the technology; this is a critical piece that has emerged from enterprise project management. This is then followed by the key step of getting the project up and running as soon as possible; not in its totality, but use the pilot, sandbox environment. Build something quickly that your users can see and then build iteratively on top of that so you get people excited and you get people using something and you can keep pace with technology.

The policy environment of provincial, federal and municipal government has seen a tight alignment in Canada between what's been happening in Ottawa, within the provinces, as well as within the municipalities. All of the health practitioners have been in line because they follow the guidelines set by the WHO. Speaking in the COVID-19 context, he said that in terms of policy enablement, at the federal level we should make data available for the public; what are the levels of cases that have been admitted into hospitals; where are the hospital hotspots; what is the fatality rate; everybody has to be working from the same day to all of the information being gathered at the local level through ICTs.

This is critical for developing countries like Pakistan and South Asia as the municipalities are cash strapped in Karachi in Lahore. GIS technology has really allowed us to focus on different demographic groups, socioeconomic groups, the community makeup and ethnic groups where COVID-19 has exposed the haves from the have-nots. The rich stay healthy, the sick stay poor as the old saying goes. The data has allowed us to focus on that and look at where access to resources such as testing and institutional support is needed.

Dr Adeela Rehman, Assistant Professor, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi talked about blended learning, which is a fusion of face-to-face and online learning, interface of human technology, motivation, structures and control. Dr Rehman said that training and development focus on changing or improving the knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals. It includes development activities, employee orientation, skills and technical training programmes. She emphasised on the need to adopt blended technology for education. In a blended blog model, online tutorial or activities are given to the students and they perform those activities and then send back their assignments to the instructors through online medium. Sharing her experience, she said that [in FJWU] during the university closure, we developed our own classes for each course on the Google classroom. We have started video lectures but after that we switched to the audio lectures only because of some cybercrimes and security issues.

She continued that the question arises about the quality of technology-oriented teaching. Our survey shows that with respect to the students' experiences, they were happy, majority feel that the quality teaching methodology was used, and teachers were competent. She concluded by saying that FJWU has also a rigorous training programme for the faculty members and we have developed our own online education system, which is available on our website. It is in this context that policy recommendations that have come out of the deliberations of this panel are vital and these will be shared with the policy makers and other stakeholders.

Mr Sartaj Aziz Former Minister of Finance, Government of Pakistan, while chairing the panel concluded by saying that a national plan which is now called a digital transformation in education, governance and health sectors should be formulated and implemented by the government in partnership with the private sector. Information Technology (IT) infrastructure must be upgraded, and quality broadband internet penetration must be provided across the country. He stressed that the taxes must be reduced on IT devices; making them affordable will ensure people's easy access to them. Mr Sartaj Aziz added that dimension of this national plan would be to bridge the digital divide as pointed out by speakers, in both terms, the digital divides which are urban and rural areas as well as gender-based divide. We have to cover this divide and for this purpose, a policy would be required on taxation side; we must reduce taxes and duties on IT services and products to be able to give access otherwise the people would not be able to afford it. He continued that we need higher level of excellence in the form of human resources in IT and telecommunications, therefore, attractive incentives must be introduced to help teachers and students. We need to produce quality professionals in the IT sector and their brain drain must be arrested.

Touching upon the umbrella theme of the Conference, Mr Sartaj Aziz said that there are far-reaching changes that the post-COVID-19 world will see, they may be difficult to anticipate, but there is absolutely no doubt that in all of these changes, ICT will continue to play a very major role in how we tackle these issues. He continued that our youth and experts have the potential to take full advantage of these opportunities if we provide them the wherewithal along with the infrastructure, education and incentives. He concluded by saying that the COVID-19 has created the largest disruption of education system on the one hand, and on the other, it has stimulated innovation within the education sector. Distant-learning system has been developed but there is a need to extend the reach of ICTs through remote access coupled with better training of teaching professionals.
Dr Abid Suleri said that the session was about the existing norms, practices, and policies in wider food system, which favoured men over women farmers. He further said the session was being held to highlight the impact of COVID-19 on food security and food systems with a gender lens.

Mr Wouter Plomp said that because of climate change, poor harvest and population growth, women are being affected all over the world. Pakistan is especially vulnerable to these threats. In normal circumstances, some 40 million people face food insecurity in Pakistan. COVID-19 has added another 2.5 million to that figure and women are especially in dire state as they face disparity in terms of food consumption. In fact, one among seven women in reproductive age in Pakistan is undernourished while many face zinc deficiencies. Under such challenges, the Netherlands works to boost food security, sustainable agriculture, and affective water management. For example, the Netherlands supports the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). In order to protect large-scale food fortification focusing on women and children, GAIN is also working to keep up food markets and protect and sustain food systems in the face of COVID-19. Finally, the Embassy of the Netherlands has set up a potato capacity building project in four districts of the Punjab to train potato growers in techniques to improve quality and quantity of production. Dr Suleri said that this project will also focus on the role of women.

H.E. Androulla Kaminara said: “We have to recognize that despite having food surplus, food insecurity is increasing in Pakistan. She said,
“It is not because there are food production shortage but the problem of access to food is due to lack of purchasing power.” Economic inequalities and high inflation were making food inaccessible to a large segment of population. She focused on five different things. The first one was COVID-19 being a reason to aggravate the already critical levels of food insecurity in certain areas of the country. Regarding this, she said that according to the latest National Nutrition Survey, 44% children under the age of five were stunted in 2018 and 37% of the population of Pakistan was facing food insecurity. We can safely say that 40-60 million people were food insecure pre-COVID-19. Behind these figures, there is another story which highlights the inequalities due to food insecurity throughout the country. For example, in some districts in Sindh and Balochistan, the figures are quite worrisome. In Tharparkar and Umerkot (located in the worst drought prone areas in the country), the EU is currently implementing food security project in collaboration with FAO to improve the situation. The second point that she discussed was poverty being the main driver behind food insecurity. The multidimensional poverty index for Pakistan which captures the three main deprivation indicators, i.e., education, health and living standards show that in 2018, 38% of the country’s population was deprived of one the above-mentioned areas. She further said that poverty rate in terms of daily income declined from around 29% to 24% in 2015-16. Since then, poverty reduction pace has decelerated due to economic issues, lack of redistribution policies as well as the impact of COVID. She added, “Being poor means that you are on the edge of the cliff, the slightest shock and you fall.” The coronavirus crisis has pushed a lot of people into further poverty and it is estimated that about 10 million people are expected to enter the poverty range due to the pandemic. The third point that H.E. Kaminara discussed was that poverty and malnutrition come hand in hand. Women face specific nutrition related challenges that take heavy toll on the society. Children of malnourished women are more likely to face cognitive impairment. They are more likely to be short in stature, have lower resistance to infection and at high risk of disease throughout their lives. She added that the more children each woman has, the higher the risk for a malnourished mother, causing bigger health risk among children. Micro-nutrient deficiencies, which affect particularly pregnant and lactating women are strongly related to GDP per capita. Current projections predict a global GDP decline of 10% due to COVID-19. In Pakistan too, it is predicted that the economy may shrink from 0.2 to -2%.

She suggested that immediate responses are required to address malnutrition among women. The number of nutrition specific measures such as maternal dietary supplementation, micronutrient supplementation or breast-feeding and complementary feeding can lead to positive impacts. She highlighted the importance of support to the government through 60 million flagship nutrition programmes, which contributed to ensure that 262 nutrition stabilization centres in eight districts were kept running during the time of COVID-19. It is estimated that about 70,000 children under the age of five will be treated for malnutrition. The fourth point that she discussed was about the recognition of the efforts that the government has been doing. The government has been making tremendous efforts to lessen the effect of COVID-19 for the most vulnerable. PKR 1.25 trillion has been spent to provide relief to daily wage workers through existing social protection systems. The international community has also shown its commitment to
tackle the situation. The main challenge remains the same as was before COVID-19, i.e., the provision of fair economic opportunities to all. Together with the provincial government of Sindh, the EU is implementing the programs that may try to devise ways to provide support to 76% of the rural population, who are uneducated landless labourers and their families. Regarding the way forward, she said that systemized gender analysis and sex-desegregated data collection needs to be done. Policies need to consider the roles of both men and women so that their multiple and differentiated needs can be adequately addressed.

**Dr Aamer Irshad** said that Pakistan’s economy faced contraction during the last year due to the coronavirus has turned out to be negative, i.e., -0.45. People’s ability to buy food and consequently the food security has suffered, especially the poor household, who are spending 50% of their income in buying food. With regard to food production, supply chains in Pakistan have been disrupted. Bad weather in Pakistan has worsened the situation, as it has hampered the production of food. According to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the world, prevalence of undernourishment in Pakistan is 12.3% with an estimated 26 million people. He said that poverty is a strong predictor of household food and Pakistan’s ongoing economic problems will make it difficult to implement the proposed food security and poverty reduction reforms that the government has set in place. Afterwards, he showed that most of the commodities are those in which Pakistan is not self-sufficient.

He said that Pakistan is importing over $5 billion worth of food items yearly. Highlighting some of the hotspots in food system of Pakistan, he said that Pakistan has jumped from number 5 to 7 in vulnerability in climate risk index and whatever the country is achieving in terms of agricultural productivity, it is coming only as a result of injection of resources and not technology. While talking about the impact of COVID-19 on rural women, he said that the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities as women are struggling in agriculture. Even before COVID-19, rural women faced difficulty as compared to men in access to productive resources, services, and technology. COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker revealed that women’s economic roles are commonly overlooked in COVID-19 response plans. While recommending the government to gender-sensitive social protection, ensuring equitable access of women to productive resources and investing in women’s leadership, he emphasized the need for availability of sex- and age-disaggregated data and analysis. The panellist ended his presentation with some information about upcoming United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 as he suggested that the country policy for food system transformation and target settings needs to be prioritized for the Food System Summit 2021.

**Dr Pauline Oosterhoff** said that her team is working on a program that looks at the COVID-19 impact on gender relations. She also emphasized on providing sex-desegregated data. If we take gender analysis, the biggest issue is the unpaid work that women have to do. COVID-19 sets the clock back for women’s rights, opportunities, and capabilities. Women’s economic roles in food production are often overlooked in COVID-19 response plans. She recommended that transforming gender relations requires approaches that address and promote equality. She added that Pakistan has made important progress in poverty reduction and reducing the prevalence of malnutrition. However, COVID-19 threats to reduce these gains.

**Dr Aneela Afzal** defined food security as: “When all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.” She said that food security and poverty are interconnected – curbing one would control the other automatically. She told people as to how governments of different countries are able to tackle poverty by managing food supplies through reducing tariff, and by managing food demand and prices. But to our dismay, these measures have not worked. These measures pose a burden on national exchequer and are not sustainable in the long run. She mentioned that COVID-19 has resulted in lower incomes, which has created more pressure on women. According to the IMF, she said if women farmers have access to resources like land, credit, fertilizer, etc. then the output can be increased by 2.5 to 4% which can be valuable for developing countries like Pakistan. She said women in Pakistan participate in all agriculture activities. For example, they contribute 30-40% in farming activity, more than 60% in raising and managing livestock and around 100% in preparation of food, home management and bringing up children, however, women landownership is restricted to less than 3% in Pakistan. Pakistan has recoded worse gender situation than its neighbours. She called upon the policy makers to suggest measures that are in harmony with social norms of the society. She listed some innovative strategies for gender development, which are value chain development, livelihood creation, nudging and policy formulation initially introduced by Michael Potter.

**Mr Rashid Mehmood** concluded the session by saying it is also important to talk about the inequality that people of the country will be facing once the vaccine comes out. He said that the number of people who do not own land in rural areas is very high. Owing to pandemic, inability of the industrial sector to provide jobs to these landless people is leading towards the higher poverty and lower access to food. He also emphasized that country cannot be evacuated out of poverty by improving agriculture alone, but we have to focus on non-agriculture professions, for example taking industry to rural masses. While mentioning the government’s response, he elaborated the package of Rs 1.25 trillion of which Rs 56 billion was allocated for agriculture.

“Our relief response is not responding to the uneven distribution of disease incidence. He also suggested working on gendered distribution of COVID-19 vaccine. He said public health system needs to be prepared for this new age of pathogens and take preventive measures.
**CONCURRENT SESSION B-8**

**Future of BRI in the post-COVID World**

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<th>Chief Guest:</th>
<th>Lieutenant General Asim Saleem Bajwa (Retired)</th>
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<td>Chair:</td>
<td>Mr Muhammad Mudassir Tipu, DG China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Government of Pakistan (GoP)</td>
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<td>Moderator:</td>
<td>Mr Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, Director, Asia Study Center (ASC), SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<td>Book Launch:</td>
<td>Understanding China for Future Cooperation</td>
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| Panellists:  | 1. Mr Hussein Askary, Section Manager, Belt and Road Institute in Sweden (BRIX), Saltsjöbaden, Sweden  
2. Mr Xie Guoxian, Minister Counsellor Economy and Commercial, Chinese Embassy in Pakistan  
3. Ms Xie Yuhong, Vice Chairperson and Secretary General, All-China Environment Federation (ACEF), Beijing, China |
| Panel Organisers: | Mr Shakeel Ahmad Ramay and Ms Ayesha Ilyas, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Report by:   | Ayesha Ilyas, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |

Mr Hussein Askary said that China’s policymaking with respect to its internal development carries over into its relationship with other developing nations that are a part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Giving the economic impact of coronavirus globally we can imagine that this whole process will be accelerated and the Chinese policy at home will be carried to the BRI nations. Mr Askary further commented that BRI project, besides helping China recover from the 2008 financial crises, has made China the world champion in construction of the most efficient infrastructure and today many nations in the world are hungry for the kind of rapid development that China has managed to achieve.

Mr Askary expressed that the western financial and banking system model was already going towards a new phase of collapse before COVID-19. Hunger, poverty, and lack of basic services like health care and other infrastructure were...
rampant across the globe. The global economic and financial system is ill-suited for a recovery from the impacts of such a crisis. The current system cannot ensure sustained economic development for all the countries. A new economic system on the global scale is required by equally sovereign nations to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. However, there are attempts, specifically in the transatlantic region, to impose restrictions on financing infrastructure including hydropower and nuclear power plants. The world needs to avoid creating such hindrances for the project for larger good.

Ms Xie Yuhong said that COVID-19 implies that the world needs to work together to overcome challenges like the pandemic, environmental pollution, climate change, etc. Ms Yuhong added that the pandemic is a proof of the world being interconnected in fate. COVID-19 is reinforcing the need for globally concentrated efforts. China firmly believes in the idea of shared prosperity and it is hoped that it will share its experience of a gradual recovery from the pandemic and we will have more practical co-operation on BRI with the stakeholders. Mr Xie Guoxian said that China has changed the traditional concept of development. With an unconventional approach, China has emerged as a powerful economic power. Through BRI, China has proposed the world with an opportunity for a win-win cooperation. The project has made great achievements since it was proposed by President Xi and will continue to do so in the years to come as BRI has gained a stronger momentum post-COVID-19.

China is also cooperating positively while recognizing all the difficulties of Pakistan. Pakistan is taking better measures to reduce its fiscal deficit. High quality of development through CPEC will be striving for ensuring people's livelihood, transportation infrastructure, energy, and sustained development of the country's economy.

Mr M. Mudassir Tipu said that China has become a central pillar supporting the global financial infrastructure and if in the future, as per the previous estimates for BRI, USD 1 trillion is injected in the global financial market, it will have a great impact on the world's economy.

Mr Tipu said that there is a complete consensus in Pakistan that CPEC remains critical for regional prosperity and will become a hub of regional trade post-COVID-19. Under CPEC, Pakistan has so far completed eight energy projects, optical fibres were laid from Xinxiang to Pakistan and there has been significant improvement in the infrastructure of the country.

Chief Guest, Lieutenant General Asim Saleem Bajwa (Retired), said that CPEC can pull the region's economy with greater efficiency and speed. It will not only help regional countries to recover fast but will also help them fight poverty and raise quality infrastructure.

It will also pave the way for regional connectivity and solve long standing issues. It will help bring sustainable peace in South Asia. Lieutenant General Bajwa (Retired) commented that China has decided to adopt the dual circulation economic model, which will give boost to national growth by enhancing domestic consumption. The enhanced demand and import of China will create multifaceted opportunities for the world's economy and will also bring special opportunities for Pakistan through CPEC.
**CONCURRENT SESSION B-9**

**Inclusive Tourism Sector Strategies to Support Post-Pandemic Recovery**

*In collaboration with the World Bank Pakistan*

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<th>Moderators:</th>
<th>Dr Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, SDPI, and Mr Mobeen Ali, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Agenda Setting Presentation:</strong></td>
<td>Ms Kiran Afzal, Finance, Competitiveness and Innovation GP, World Bank, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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| **Private Sector Perspectives:** | 1. Mr Aftab-ur-Rehman Rana, President, Sustainable Tourism Foundation Pakistan (STFP)  
2. Mr Naveed Khan, Founder, Hunza on Foot  
3. Mr Komail Naqvi, Co-Founder and CEO, Find My Adventure |
| **Public Sector Perspectives:** | 1. Mr Malik Babur Javed, Manager (P&P), Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC)  
2. Mr Hasan Daud Butt, CEO, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa BoI, GoP |
| **Closing Remarks:** | Dr Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| **Panel Organisers:** | World Bank Pakistan, Mr Mobeen Ali, and Ms Mahnoor Arshad, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| **Report by:** | Aiza Zafar, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan |

Mr Mobeen Ali from the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) inaugurated the session and introduced the worthy panellists. He outlined that the session aimed to discuss evolving challenges faced by the tourism sector, how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and related stakeholders in the tourism sector can be better equipped for dealing with future disasters in a resilient manner, managing operational issues in the tourism sector, development of new tourism assets, the combined role of government, non-government, and development partner organizations, and roles and responsibilities of provincial governments.

Ms Kiran Afzal, Senior Private Sector Specialist from the World Bank, set the agenda for the session. She said that in South Asia alone there are 10 million jobs at risk in the travel and tourism industry. There are 3Rs at the World Bank considered to be very important for the tourism sector to recover. Our ultimate goal is the sector competitiveness to be restored and recovered in order to create the jobs that have been lost, and to restore the ownership of the communities which has been taken up by the pandemic. Ms Afzal said that the first target is resilient tourism sector which can withstand the shocks of human and financial constraints. Responsible tourism is one in which communities, travellers, private sector and other stakeholders take responsibility for their own roles, thus making the tourism sector a sustainable one as well.
She continued that the World Bank has undertaken activities with the public sector authority. A lot of public sectors have been developed which is a good sign. The facilities which were absent previously are now being procured and established. But it is important to ensure that it is reliable in the long run. It is also important for the travellers’ confidence that the facilities at the destination are of high-quality and well-maintained.

She continued that we need to understand the previously faced risks in tourism. There are going to be more natural, man-made and other disasters for which this sector needs to be prepared. It is important to prioritize what decisions need to be taken, how finances are going to flow into the sector, and from where the sector can get biggest mileage for the buck. Ms Afzal said that mitigation, preparedness, responsiveness and recovery and long-term resilient actions mean that all the infrastructure products and services should be properly scanned for climate smart engineering, green footprint, climate footprint and enhanced participation of communities. So, there is more awareness among the stakeholders. She stressed that information for travellers is very critical as they need to be made aware about their role and along with it, local authorities also need to be strengthened.

Ms Afzal said that implementation mechanism is going to be very important which means that the building codes have to be enforced. Tourists should be penalized for unruly behaviour. Operation or maintenance of all the assets should be looked after otherwise they are going to be in a run-down condition very soon. In an ideal tourist destination, almost 70% revenue left by tourist at the site should go towards the local community but at the moment this is not happening in Pakistan. The framework which we have devised consists of short-term, medium-term and long-term actions. Community ownership is going to be a critical part of it as they need to start respecting their sites in order to get respect from the travellers as well. She concluded by highlighting some key recommendations: from the private sector, corporate social responsibility (CSR) should not be ignored, they need to be held accountable for their actions. They need to start contributing their efforts around green tourism. Regardless of whatever the product they produce, they have a role to play in protecting the environment and in reducing their carbon footprint. Second, insurance of the tourism assets is going to be extremely critical for private sector. And third, we should encourage technology and innovation in this sector.

Mr Komail Naqvi, co-founder and CEO of FMA, highlighted that long term sustainability for tourism sector had been missing which is now being focused upon. Compared to other countries, standards of service and hospitality of Pakistan were very low. COVID-19 made us realize what can be done to make it better. We are not certain about COVID-19, so it is important to focus on long-term progress and safer ways of tourism. Mr Naqvi said that the community and the supply side are very important, but it is also important to educate the demand side as well. In Pakistan, we have a short-term approach, it makes us focus on the point that we should focus on human development in local communities. The communities have the real power for making money and sustaining their areas throughout the year through different initiatives. It is the responsibility of the private sector and the supply side to educate the community and help them create more initiatives. He concluded by saying that we should concentrate more on human development that will probably make progress in this sector.

Mr Naveed Khan, founder of Hunza on Foot said that next year’s tourism is likely to be over-whelming and
should be timed very carefully. The numbers seen even before the COVID-19 were very harmful to the environment as pollution comes with people. With reference to the social media news about trash and over pricing, he lamented that the image of those places is going down. He said that these are all direct and indirect impacts of what we have allowed tourism to let in. Mass tourism is never the answer, it might prove great in return of some economy in the short term. It is not going to help anyone in the long term if there are no limits. The government and tourists should know how many people can be taken to a certain place at a particular time in a year in a month. He stressed that responsibility lies on the tourist operator that he/she should educate the tourists about ethics at the travel destination.

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In Pakistan, we have a short-term approach, it makes us focus on the point that we should focus on human development in local communities. The communities have the real power for making money and sustaining their areas throughout the year through different initiatives. It is the responsibility of the private sector and the supply side to educate the community and help them create more initiatives. He concluded by saying that we should concentrate more on human development that will probably make progress in this sector.

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**SPECIAL PLENARY**

**Pakistan’s Economic Response to COVID-19 and Way Forward for an Inclusive Recovery**

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<tr>
<th>Guest:</th>
<th>Dr Reza Baqir, Governor, State Bank of Pakistan, Karachi, Pakistan</th>
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<tr>
<td>Host:</td>
<td>Dr Abid Q. Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<td>Plenary Organizer:</td>
<td>Dr Sajid Amin, SDPI, Islamabad</td>
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<td>Report by:</td>
<td>Muhammad Umar Ayaz, SDPI, Islamabad</td>
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Governor of State Bank, Dr Reza Baqir, said there are three phases of Pakistan economy, i.e. pre-COVID, during COVID, and post-COVID. In pre-COVID phase, he said, it was facing two big challenges, i.e., current account deficit and fiscal deficit. The current account deficit was affecting the exchange rate regime due to which the exchange rate was unable to maintain the market level. Foreign reserves were used to cover this deficit which ultimately...
shrank our capacity for foreign payments. Besides, this public debt was also expanding due to fiscal deficit. Before COVID-19, policymakers thought that these two were the main problems of our economy. If we look at the facts then we come to know that our current account deficit was almost zero or near to zero, but during the period between 2015-18, it started rising due to the fixed exchange rate. Sometime back, this deficit had reached to $2 billion per month and was around $19 billion last year. Similarly, the fiscal deficit also remained positive in the first nine months of 2020. Because of this improvement in the pre-COVID era, Pakistan stock market showed improvement and a positive change was also seen in the business confidence index. According to Bloomberg, Pakistan's stock market started performing across the world's leading stock markets.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government and the State Bank took various measures for protecting domestic economy. The government responded strongly in fiscal stimulation and allocated around $1200 billion to mitigate the COVID-19 impact. In this regard, wheat procurement, tax refunds and labour allocations were increased. Another initiative of the government was the Ehsaas Emergency Cash Program through which around PKR 180 billion was distributed among 14 million households within.

Dr Baqir said that during COVID-19, the State Bank also took various measures to support economy. First of all, the bank cut the interest rate, which was higher than the other emerging economies. It resulted in interest savings of around PKR 470 billion. Secondly, the bank injected around PKR 1.8 trillion in business and household cash flows, including interest rate benefits, loan deferment, loan rescheduling, etc., for supporting economy during COVID-19. Owing to cut in interest rate, there occurred a saving of around PKR 470 billion, which accounts for around 1.1% of GDP. Loan deferment program was a loan extension program for at least one year. Under this program, around PKR 658 billion was shifted to next year that was due this year. Another initiative from the State Bank was the loan rescheduling in which bank and client rescheduled loan payments with mutual interest. Its objective was to save banks from bankruptcy which ultimately resulted in saving employment. Payroll finance scheme was also introduced by the State Bank to protect economy during the pandemic. Under this scheme, working capital was provided to a person at cheap rates for meeting their expenses of payroll if he/she committed not to lay off any of his/her employees for the next six months. PKR 238 billion was released under this programme and around 50% of the SMEs got benefit through this scheme.

He further said another payment scheme from the bank was Temporary Economic Refinance Facility (TERF). Under this scheme, cheap loans were provided to new investors. In case someone was willing to set up a new industry or wanted to modernize the existing one, he/she could get a loan at 5% interest rate under TERF. Now, the question arises that after taking many measures, has there occurred any change in the exchange reserves? Dr Baqir said that even after taking all these measures, there is an increase in gross reserves. On 30 June 2019, our reserves were around $7.3 billion which rose to $13.3 billion on 4 December 2020. Additionally, he said, that the foreign borrowing was declined during this period. The reason behind this increase in foreign reserves was the measures taken by the State Bank before COVID crisis.

Dr Baqir said if there was no constraint on emerging economies then their response may be the same as that of the developed economy, but unfortunately, this was not possible because the poor countries do not have many resources. As the public debt of Pakistan is high, therefore, we need to be very careful while providing fiscal stimulus. The more we give fiscal stimulus, the more debt will increase. He said that the current monetary policy is very supportive as during COVID-19, our policy rate has lower than inflation rate, which was totally inverse before the pandemic. Referring to the monetary policy statement, Dr Baqir said there is no pressure on inflation from aggregate demand side. It is needed to keep the real interest rate negative so as to support economy and recover it in a better way.

In response to a question regarding provision of benefits to SMEs, he said that the State Bank is working to lend SMEs. He said that around 50% of the borrowing of payroll scheme was led by SMEs. Besides, the government has also announced the risk insurance for the SMEs on first loss basis in which if any SME faces 40% loss, then the government will bear that loss.

In response to a question regarding slowing down of construction sector during lockdown, Dr Baqir said that GDP percentage for house financing is less than 5% in Pakistan, which is very low. So, first of all we need to know about the reasons due to which this sector is not flourishing. For this, the Prime Minister himself would attend the National Coordination Committee meetings every week in which all the stakeholders were invited to resolve their issues. Besides, the State Bank has also assigned targets to the banks to allocate 5% of loan portfolio for housing and construction finance.

In response to the government borrowing, Dr Baqir said that the government borrowing from the State Bank is also declining as during the first nine months of 2020, primary balance was surplus. About the stability of dollar, he said that holding exchange rate at a price is not a sustainable method. Keeping exchange rate on an artificial level will reduce foreign reserves and also affect comparativeness of the economy.

Talking about the damage done due to COVID-19, he said that the magnitude damage remained low in Pakistan as compared to the other emerging economies. The reason behind it is that Pakistan has quickly controlled the situation, so there is no bankruptcy. Before COVID, the interest rate was high, but after the coronavirus hit the country, it declined. To a question, he said it is the monetary policy committee that decides either to increase or decrease the interest rate keeping in view different economic indicators. Pakistan does not have its own digital gateway transactions as we are moving towards the 4th generation, he said, adding that the State Bank is also working on this agenda and micropayment gateway will be launched in January 2021.
During the first phase of COVID-19 days, there was no fee on digital transactions. Pakistan is also part of the IMF Extended Fund Facility Program aiming to bring about reforms in our energy sector to avoid rising circular debt, and expensive electricity generation. Secondly, tax reforms are also part of this programme. He said, “We want two things simultaneously: increase in tax collection, and inclusion of people in tax-net, who are not the part of it.”

Dr Baqir concluded that as a State Bank we are optimistic that we will see the early signs of promising recovery. Otherwise, we will remain the hostage of our past. We have to recognize ourselves as the 5th largest country in the world. We cannot let our expectations for the future be limited by the problems of the past. We have to embrace the future as a nation that does not have any inherent constraints on its abilities to achieve economic prosperity.

### DIALOGUE PLENARY

**COVID-19 Challenges for SDGs and Human Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hosts:</th>
<th>Dr Abid Q Suleri, Executive Director, and Dr Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Conversation With:</td>
<td>Dr Ishrat Husain, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Institutional Reforms and Austerity, Government of Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plenary Organisers:</td>
<td>Mr Ali Rehmat and Mr Fahad Khan, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report by:</td>
<td>Mr Ahad Nazir, SDPI, Islamabad</td>
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### Sustainable Development in the Times of COVID-19

The Dialogue Plenary was co-moderated by Dr Abid Suleri, Executive Director and Dr Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, SDPI. The guest for this plenary was Dr Ishrat Hussain, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Institutional Reforms and Austerity. To start off the session, the moderators gave introductions and summary of the details of the proceedings of the initial two days of the Conference. Dr Ishrat Husain’s talk encompassed four major aspects, a) global issues of sustainable development, b) role of multilaterals, c) regional cooperation issues, d) institutional reforms in Pakistan.
Global Issues of Sustainable Development

While talking about the overall aspects of sustainable development, Dr Ishrat Husain said that he believes that the biggest threat in this regard is climate change. Since the developed countries like the USA have started to dismiss the agenda of climate change Paris Agreement, there is a very weak case for climate change being a strengthened item for national and international reforms. But on the other end, European Union and China’s commitments and actions towards climate risk mitigation are commendable. Pakistan, being a high-risk country, is bound to be affected if measures are not taken.

Secondly, he emphasized on the technological disruption especially catalysed by COVID-19. This disruption has increased the productivity and efficiency of the economic systems. But on the same page, the incidences of digital divide and infrastructural gaps in digital technology became more evident. He emphasized that tech companies with incidences of being less regulated are now covering 8 out of the top 10 businesses of the world.

Thirdly, he talked about the reduction in multi-dimensional poverty as per the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) between 1990 and 2015 which was significant, the figures for various aspects of inequalities have increased around the world and resources do not have an equitable distribution globally. The significant creation of wealth by tech companies is also creating income inequality.

Fourthly, he raised the point that instead of continuing the integrated supply chain model being used by countries where parts and components are sourced from developing countries and assembled at the source has also been diminished primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic causing border closures. This has put the international trade at high risk and with increased anti-globalization and nationalism in the developed countries due to which the globalization agenda is not ready to be fulfilled. This is also leading to anti-immigration laws which is diminishing the brain integration that has worked so well for the EU and the USA. Furthermore, he said that COVID-19 has changed the role of the state. Even the most developed nations had to protect the economy through fiscal stimuli and monetary incentives. He also emphasized that at the moment the need for knowledge economy is most urgent for countries like Pakistan.

Role of Multilaterals

Further, Dr Ishrat Husain discussed the roles of multilateral institutions in today’s world. He apprised that the multilateral institutions like WHO and WTO have been on the back seat for a long time due to the China-US trade wars. For any global public good issue like COVID-19, we need buy in and need collaboration of the international developed countries. But there is a vacuum in the international arena at the moment. There is a need to apprise the multilateral that during COVID-19, the other systemic issues like climate change, and food and nutrition emergencies should not be downgraded. Redirection of these priorities will reverse the actual goal of multilateralism. Focus should be on improving the structural efficiencies of these bodies through a more inclusive collaboration and communication between international governments, private sector and civil society. We need unanimity of actions from all these actors for the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

Regional Cooperation Issues

While talking about the need for a stronger international public-private engagement, Dr Husain commented that this is a global need of the hour. He further emphasized that for any reform agenda to be upheld by the private sector, the government needs to present a business case. This has resulted in 90% of the future investments going towards clean energy rather than oil.

Institutional Reforms in Pakistan

While discussing regional cooperation, Dr Husain pointed out that the most important aspect is for the governments to tackle the issue of depleting water resources which will eventually affect food and energy security as well as livelihood in the region. While the governments should manage the water resources within, the countries should aim to resolve past differences and discuss and cooperate on the effective utilization of natural resources.
The performance-based criteria and subsequent incentives will increase the productivity of the Government. The reforms will take place at the induction level. Specialist subjects relevant to the cadre will be selected. All civil servants whether cadre, ex-cadre or non-cadre will be received and be evaluated against generalized and specific modules. With regards to the appraisal, a key performance indicator-based system will be introduced where the top performers will be subsequently incentivized. Pension reforms and removal from service after 20 years based on poor performance are also under consideration.

**DIALOGUE PLENARY**

**Economic Security and Diplomacy in the Times of COVID-19**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Conversation With:</th>
<th>Dr Moeed Yusuf, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Security Division and Strategic Policy Planning, Government of Pakistan (GoP)</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Hosts:               | 1. Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad  
                       | 2. Dr Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad                                                                 |
| Plenary Organisers:  | Mr Ali Rehmat and Mr Fahad Khan, SDPI, Islamabad                                                                                |
| Report by:           | Izza Mustafa, Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), Rawalpindi, Pakistan                                                        |

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri started the conversation by inquiring from Dr Moeed Yusuf about his present success and experiences as the national security advisor.

Dr Moeed Yusuf said that it was a great learning experience, and he is becoming a bigger advocate of joining policy making and implementation bodies of the government. He said people in our field must join the government and serve in whatever possible way they can. Researchers have access to government for analysis, but the frustration faced was whether their research practically contributes to policy making or not. He further said that his team has set up a dedicated think tank and university portal with an idea of building a dedicated channel for all registered Pakistani think tanks to provide direct input on all matters of national security especially food and climate insecurity. Secondly, the main focus was on building national narrative on state building and reflecting the positive image of Pakistan globally by fighting against Indian propaganda.
The vision of Prime Minister of Pakistan is based on economic security paradigm with three pillars, i.e., connectivity, regional peace, and developmental partnerships.

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The dream of Pakistan is to become "the melting point of positive global economic interests". Pakistan is not in the business of providing military bases anymore, as we are inclined towards the business of providing economy-based solutions. We want to create an image of Pakistan as a hub of interdependence. We want to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan which will result in revival of economic activities in the region. Regional peace is essentially a theme of a responsible Pakistan and this is possible only by learning from the past. To focus on economic security paradigm with positive projection of Pakistan, it is pivotal to have a clear narrative which is built around economic security and economic diplomacy. The future of Pakistan lies in economic diplomacy and economic outreach to the world. National security division has done a dedicated comprehensive mapping exercise to figure out how to move from a model where we use our political leverage for economic gains to a model where our economic leverage is also used for political gains. Economic security cannot come at the expense of military security and human security. Tough challenge is to expand the national resource pie in a way that macroeconomic stability benefits both human and military security.

Discussing the issue of India's smear campaign against Pakistan as revealed by EU DisinfoLab and the planning to diminish these campaigns, Dr Moeed Yusuf insisted that Pakistan has to push back against India's narrative by taking legal and diplomatic actions it can. Also, the country needs to have a pro-active narrative of its own that reflects reality. We also need to improve our ground realities by knowing that our trajectory is towards betterment.

Ehsaas Program, new digital platforms, and initiatives for human rights are some examples of the positive image of Pakistan. There have been zero acts of major violence in economic hubs and economic zones. Pakistan's approach is unapologetic, bold, but pragmatic. The practical way to achieve Economic Outreach Initiative is a five-step process.

You map your potential around the world (goods and services).

- Identify the hurdles in achieving the targets identified from mapping exercise.
- Find solutions to the problems faced.
- Prioritize and start implementing solutions.
- Involve private sector, human resources and build new coordination mechanisms.

A comprehensive re-doing is done with super liberal visa regimes to integrate Afghanistan's economy for Afghanistan's benefit and for our benefit. A revolutionary idea of e-office is being done to reduce the lack of communication which is a great hurdle in implementation and coordination plans.

On Pakistan's stance with regard to regime change in the US, Dr Moeed Yusuf said that good part of the US new regime is that a lot of them have already served in Obama administration. Also, there are a number of avenues which are unexplored with the US. First thing to change is that Pakistan needs to alter the old dependent approach of interaction with the US and other countries. Topics like increasing economic base of country, trade, etc., should be discussed rather than Afghan peace talks and other mediating roles. We should ask other countries why is Pakistan so indispensable for them? In reply to a question on the position of Pakistan and the nature of conversation it wants with its ally countries, Dr Moeed Yusuf said that it is a question of how psychologically secure you are. It does not matter how physically secure you are. On the issue of decent relationship with Biden administration that could bring us closer to our traditional partners in the Middle East, he said that he does not support this idea; the world is in a very fluid situation, patterns will shift. Static relationships do not last in foreign affairs. Pakistan stands on a principal position on Palestine, just like Jammu & Kashmir, it will not change. Our relationships with sovereign countries are not bad; any hurdle created by India can be solved through negotiations. Regarding the signing of number of MoUs signed with friendly countries by the government, as there is a lack of implementation and outcomes are not visible, he said that in order to get plans implemented, there is a need to prioritize the MoUs signed between Pakistan and allies.

Dr Moeed Yusuf while elaborating his definition of national security, said that there are two pillars of national security: traditional and non-traditional. Traditional security is military focused backed by diplomacy. Non-traditional security has two parts: economic security and human security. Human security includes social welfare, climate, food, etc. Economic security is expanding the side of national resource pie, i.e., macro-economy.
economic security at the core, it means we have more dollars to put in human and military security. So, all three are interconnected; if one falters, the other falters as well. He said that our military is grossly under-funded, but still operating at its full vigour. Talking about the challenges faced by the government on the issues of non-discretionary expenditure during COVID-19, he reflected upon 4Ds (debt services, day-to-day administration, defence, and development). On debt services, the Prime Minister took a global lead for debt restructuring and debt relief. For day-to-day administration, the government has shrunk its daily expenditures on luxuries. For defence, despite being grossly under-funded, they are operating with tight belts. On development, Pakistan has set examples for the world in the form of Ehsaas Program and other welfare schemes. He said the state founded opportunities from the situation of COVID-19, exported surgical masks, built ventilators, etc.

To a question about investment diplomacy in Pakistan, he said the role of coordination in this regard is very crucial, especially federal-provincial coordination after 18th amendment is not easy to achieve for the goal of investment diplomacy.

### CONCURRENT SESSION C-1

**Finding the Way Forward in Post-COVID-19 Pakistan with the Doing Good Index**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chair:</th>
<th>Dr Waqar Masood Khan, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Revenue, Government of Pakistan</th>
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<tr>
<td>Moderator:</td>
<td>Dr Shafqat Munir, Research Fellow, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation:</td>
<td>Ms Mehvesh Mumtaz Ahmed, Director of Research, Centre for Asian Philanthropy and Society (CAPS), Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Speakers: | 1. Mr Aamir Yusuf, Joint Secretary, Jamiat Punjabi Saudagar-e-Delhi, Karachi  
2. Mr Ahmed Chinoy, Former Chairman, Pakistan Cloth Merchant Association, Karachi, Pakistan  
3. Mr Muazzam Arslan Bhatti, CEO, Alfoze Technologies Pvt Ltd, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Plenary Organisers: | Dr Sajid Amin Javed, Dr Shafqat Munir, and Ali Rehmat, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Report by: | Aiza Zafar, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan |
Dr Shafqat Munir explained the session's focus on finding a way forward to promoting philanthropy in Pakistan in particular and South Asia in general. In Pakistan, right from individual philanthropy to religious, cultural, and institutional philanthropy is also infectious.

To work at societal level is a good thing, but there exists a gap. There is no legal binding which can actually move us from philanthropic approach to a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Now, the debate is above CSR and the world is talking about social investments. There are three sectors, which can help improve the doing good index, i.e., government, business and social sector.

Dr Waqar Masood Khan said that in times of any crisis, our people always helped each other at individual level. Private charity has flourished during the pandemic. The government has done a remarkable job, as it was able to reach out to 16.5 million households and gave them a helping hand. Corporate sector was missing, most probably because it was itself in distress. There is some stress on the businesses because of lockdown. The second wave of coronavirus has not led to same kind of disruption as it did in the first wave. The government has increased its support. This is the time when the businesses have to come forward.

To a question regarding Doing Good Index, he said that the government is focusing on well-being of people, but there is a risk of free riders in giving incentives. The organizations have to make them legal under the centre of philanthropy. The government will ease the procedure. The concessions available in philanthropy is remarkable, which are made through taxes. Organizations are working without tax burdens. There should be cooperation between the private sector and government.

Ms Mehvish Muntaz Ahmed presented the findings from Doing Good Index report 2020. Introducing the Centre for Asian Philanthropy and Society, she said that it is mainly a research and advisory organization working in Asia. Its goal is to increase private social investment across Asia. She argued that the world was hit by a COVID-19 social crisis and social sector was helping the needy. Social sector came to the forefront and helped in providing food aid, direct health care and medical services, emergency grants and loans along with supporting government initiatives. Talking about the potential for philanthropy, she said that if every Asian country gives 2% of its GDP to philanthropist work then tremendous $587 billion could actually be collected for the social sector. That is the 12 times of the foreign aid flowing to Asia and one-third of the cost of achieving SDGs by 2030. These resources can be integrated in three ways: aligning incentives around doing good, mitigating the trust deficit and maximizing private social investment flowing to the social sector.

The role of Doing Good Index is to enable all the factors, which are divided into four areas: regulation, tax and fiscal incentive area, ecosystem (how society is interacting with the social sector) and procurement. "We are seeing an upward trend in procurement area in Pakistan. Pakistan is doing better but can do well with improved regulations, better incentives for giving, greater collaboration between government, corporate and the social sector.

The findings of the report suggest that 70% of social delivery organizations in Pakistan find laws difficult to understand and comply with. When there is less compliance, there is less trust of public in the social sector and of government as well. More trust and transparency are needed in the social sector. Social sector is not waiting for the government to come and build transparency, it is taking steps to inculcate transparency itself.

Pakistan is one of the three countries in Asia social organizations have come up with their own oversight body. Foreign aid is decreasing in Pakistan. Since the countries
become richer, foreign funders are switching to other poorer countries. By offering tax incentives, individual or corporate funding can be increased. In Asia, tax incentives have two impacts: people are just likely to give more and people become cognizant that giving to the social sector is worthy. There are two kinds of collaborations between government and social sector, that are procurement and government grants. There is a need for greater collaboration between corporate sector and social sector because corporate sector is well-resourced. Other than funding, corporates can help the social sector by volunteering and sitting in the board of non-profit organizations. The government can nurture regulations and tax laws, which will generate positive signalling. Businesses can do funding, skill transfer and engage in partnerships. The social sector organizations can engage themselves with government and corporates so as to build trust. Shift of attitude is very important. There should be ease of doing good and the government should make the environment conducive to it.

Mr Ahmed Chinoy highlighted the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that the virus has been in Pakistan for the last 10 months and we are observing its trend. Pakistan saw the behaviour of public towards the virus and the government’s behaviour towards this situation. He said that we were rather slow in tackling the spread of virus. He appreciated the steps taken by Sindh government in containing the spread of COVID-19. People across the country participated in philanthropic activities, provided their ideas and support as how to reach the vulnerable communities, etc. This helped the government and motivated them. With the help of social media, people played a very important role. At the start of the pandemic, COVID-19 patients had a difficult time in getting aid from hospitals. But, with the passage of time, the facilities were increased. The expo centre in Karachi and Lahore are major examples of this increase. Many beds and isolation wards were set up there. Even there was a consideration to close the newly established wards due to no reported patients of coronavirus. He mentioned that apart from private hospitals that only elite can afford, the hospitals running on charities provided excellent medical care to the patients. Owing to the charities given, the hospitals are willing to take the patients and help those in distress. It is important to mark the needy people in the given scenario. About 90% of philanthropy organizations are not registered with the government. He said that these organizations or people, who are donating for a good cause should get themselves registered so that the government can help in getting the outreach and the real funding and support might reach the needy people.

Mr Aamir Yusuf discussed the working of his community-based organization called Jamiati Punjabi Saudagar-e-Delhi which has been serving humanity since 1948. The organization is working in the sectors of health, food security and education and supporting up to 600 families a year. In the times of coronavirus pandemic, they kept on serving the needy and many people in the organization volunteered to help the people in need. There is an instability in government policies. In Pakistan, until a policy is applied, and results are produced, the government keeps on changing that policy. He said Karachi is supposed to be city of 30 million population, but in official papers and administrative census, it is said to be 15 million only. Any planning done in Karachi faces a great setback due to this misinformation. The government’s plans fail due to this wrong information.

Mr Muazzam Arsalan Bhatti said that during the pandemic, we had a different challenge as compared to the challenges we faced before. Coronavirus has hit all major cities shattering all segments of life everywhere. The social welfare organizations have helped a lot of people. But the designated bodies of the government did not show a responsible role in this situation. The government played a defensive role rather than helping the public practically. The government did not contact the proper organizations to give them consultation on how to deal with such crisis. He said that it was alarming to see that we do not have any proper plan to deal with any such issue. So, we should have some proper planning for any future crisis to might tackle it. ‘Work from home’ concepts have also arisen, and corporations are more acceptable to hiring people from far-flung areas. He said we need to promote a sharing and sympathy between corporate sectors. The business practices should be social-friendly. There should be more safety guidelines followed in our working sector. He said the micro sectors suffered the most in these times. The corporate system should be directed into helping these sectors so that they can be re-established.

**During the pandemic, we had a different challenge as compared to the challenges we faced before. Coronavirus has hit all major cities shattering all segments of life everywhere. The social welfare organizations have helped a lot of people.**
Mr Kashif Salik highlighted some key aspects of the topic as to how the COVID-19 provides the opportunity for renewable energy and decarbonization and how the investments in the energy system could thrive a way for equitable and resilient economies.

Mr Zheng Baihua said that Asia is rich in green energy sources with the potential of 47% hydro, 28% solar, and 30% wind energy of the world. So, the usage of hydro-solar and wind energy will be sufficient to meet the energy demands of Asia and regain the economic growth with the
reduction in carbon emissions at the same time. He also briefed the participants about the Global Energy Interconnection Initiative (GEI) and Asia Energy Interconnection Initiative (AEI) and their purpose to replace fossil energy with clean energy at production site because currently Asia is confronted with the heavy task of reducing carbon emissions.

He further said that renewable energy power generation is expected to become Asia's dominant power source by 2035. With this, the per capita cost of electricity in Asia will be set to drop by more than 40% and carbon emissions will be reduced to 60% by 2050. Priority needs to be given to develop renewable energy bases rich in resources and outstanding in economic benefits and in transmitting the electricity to load centres while satisfying local needs. He proposed that Asia being the most dynamic region, it is important to enhance synergies in development and planning, promote the coordination of policies and mechanisms within governments, and implement key energy projects.

Mr Michael Williamson discussed different dimensions of regional cooperation and support of UN and other international agencies in accelerating the energy transition in Asia and Pacific region. In 2020, the overlapping crises of COVID-19 include health crisis on top, followed by social and economic crises, which tested global cooperation and raised questions on globalization. He said that COVID-19 reminds us of the importance of interconnected systems (energy, ICTs, healthcare, transport & logistics). While there may have been issues in this, energy transition continues. COVID-19 has changed forecasts for GDP, electricity, energy, and commodities. Its economic impact will drag on growth for years.

He proposed that we need to promote decoupling of GDP and carbon emissions (promote decarbonization, zero carbon emissions and structural shifts to economy). So, this crisis allows renewable energy and energy efficiency to continue improving reducing its cost. New frameworks need to be developed for energy security and energy resilience, especially in times of pandemics. Green stimulus is an important factor to take route which will determine where we will end up in 2030. Dr Michael Jakob talked about carbon pricing, its impact on low-and medium-income countries (LMICs) and mechanisms about phasing out of coal for electricity sector in order to meet the objectives of Paris Agreement. He said that currently about 20% of global emissions are covered by carbon prices, but these are well below the range needed to achieve targets of the Paris Agreement. He questioned whether it was fair and adequate to call for emissions’ pricing in LMICs if rich countries do not do their homework.

He stressed the need for carbon pricing for emission reduction as well as its potential beneficial effects for the economy and highlighted that carbon pricing can increase the tax base and provides the incentives from shifting informal to formal sector which ultimately impact LMICs.
He suggested that revenue recycling and cooperation to implement policies rather than projects can increase political feasibility that includes financial support, capacity building, and common price corridors.

Ms Milou Beerepooot quoted the UN Secretary General that “Development is not possible without energy and sustainable development is not possible without sustainable energy.” She made this statement the focus of her discussion. She said that UNDP’s role is to provide “integrator function” to 2030 agenda and highlighted the project of “Climate Promise” as an example of regional collaboration. Its objective is to support 100 countries to enhance their Nationally Determined Contributions by 2021, with demonstrated increase in ambition. With 115 countries participating, the Climate Promise hopes to build political will and societal ownership at national and sub-national levels, review, align and update existing targets, and policies, incorporate new sectors, access costs and investment opportunities, and monitor transparency and progress.

She also emphasized the concept of shifting great economy to green economy which will ultimately aid in creating more jobs, specifically in the pandemic era. However, much work is needed to uplift and link the NDC and COVID-19 policy responses for a green recovery. Mr Ahsan Javed said that COVID-19 has basically choked the energy demand at the industrial and commercial sites and disrupted the energy supply chains. However, it also offers an opportunity to realign our direction in terms of clean energy resources using environment friendly technologies. He also emphasized on exchange of knowledge, enforcement of rules and regulations for the deployment of increased renewable energies in specific countries and capacity building of member states as key aspects for regional cooperation. He emphasized on private sector investments in different areas and said that government policies should be implemented in this regard. While considering the agriculture sector in India and Pakistan, he suggested using solar water pumping, which on one hand provides clean technology, and on the other offsets the electricity requirement.

Dr Hina Aslam discussed the ways of investment in energy system that can ultimately derive other ways for equitable and resilient economies and accelerated transition towards 100% renewable energy. She presented her ongoing research study on the assessment of post-COVID-19 scenario of energy transition in Pakistan and shed light on some of the economic green recovery packages, like employment of 65,000 people in 10 billion tree tsunami project, fuel price relief through PKR 70 billion, signing the $188 million project under “Pakistan Hydromet and Ecosystem Restoration Services Project” initiated by Pakistan in response to COVID-19.

She also stressed whether the pandemic and its impact can suppress the emissions, but low economic growth is not a low emission strategy. Only an acceleration in structural changes to the way Pakistan produces and consumes energy can break the emissions trend for good. She suggested that investment in education and training to address immediate unemployment from COVID-19, structural shifts from decarbonization, investment in clean cooking and electricity access as well as clean R & D spending is need of the hour.

Dr Vaqar Ahmed highlighted that a careful study and evaluation is now required as to why the political and economic incentives for regional cooperation and renewable energy have been missed and how to take the measures to the next level in order to make a move towards green recovery. In conclusion, the worthy panellists put forwarded the following policy recommendations:

- Regional cooperation, whether it is South-South cooperation, or North-South cooperation should be order of the day in areas like innovation, technology transfer, capacity building and knowledge sharing on issues like water, food, and energy.
- A stakeholder-centric approach with private sector engagement will help Pakistan build back better.
- As a long-term plan, Pakistan must diversify its supply chains, develop local industries, provide finance and promote supplier development programs and industry clusters.
- Enhanced climate-energy policies will enable cleaner energy transition. The government should strengthen international energy and climate plans in ways that complement existing initiatives, support multilateral efforts to facilitate and enable Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) implementation.
- For the region, the focus also needs to be on raising climate ambition, safeguarding ecosystem health, clean air for all, and cities for a sustainable future.
- Innovative solutions can be harnessed to address the climate crisis through more ambitious mitigation pathways such as increasing energy efficiency of industry and cities by 60-70%; decarbonization of electricity; deep reductions in agricultural emissions; and advancing carbon capture, carbon storage and sequestration measures.
- Focus on climate action will be beneficial because climate action and COVID-19 recovery are integrated steps of mitigation.
- To improve carbon pricing in LMICs, there is a need to protect vulnerable groups of society for revenue recycling during the process.
- More policy analysis as well as guidance is required on COVID-19 green recovery. In this context, the UNESCAP Framework for socioeconomic response could be helpful.
- New energy frameworks for energy security and energy resilience are required, especially to overcome pandemics.
- Success stories of net metering, hydro projects, electrical grid stabilities, solar and wind projects could be replicated in the region from India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Pakistan to ensure energy transition.
- Public-private partnership in the clean energy sector could be used to enhance regional cooperation for energy transition.
CONCURRENT SESSION C-3

Access to Healthcare and Competition

In collaboration with Consumer Unity & Trust Society International (CUTS) International

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chair &amp; Moderator:</th>
<th>Mr Pradeep S. Mehta, CUTS International, Jaipur, India</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Address:</td>
<td>Dr Abid Q. Suleri, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Speakers:

1. Dr Joseph Wilson, Former Chairman, Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP), Pakistan
2. Ms Teresa Moreira, Head, Competition and Consumer Policies Branch (CCBP), UNCTAD, Geneva, Switzerland
3. Mr Hardin Ratshisusu, DC, Competition Commission of South Africa (CCSA), Pretoria, South Africa
4. Mr Allan Asher, Chair, Foundation for Effective Markets & Governance (FEMAG), Australia

Panel Organisers:

1. Mr Ujjwal Kumar, CUTS International, India
2. Mr Udai Mehta, CUTS International, India
3. Mr Akshay Sharma, CUTS International, India
4. Ms Zahra Khalid, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan

Report by: Urva Akmal, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Dr Abid Q. Suleri welcomed and introduced all the panellists and highlighted the importance of this session by mentioning the accessibility and affordability of healthcare services especially vaccines in the times of COVID-19. The competition commissions are still struggling in our region with regard to healthcare, said Dr Suleri.

Mr Pradeep S. Mehta said that we celebrated the “world competition day” on 5 December 2020 around the world in which 30 countries participated including Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP). He said focus on healthcare and competition was raised during a conference in Geneva and we planned to highlight this issue at a higher level. Furthermore, the cost of healthcare in the developing world is much higher in percentage than in the developed world. In India, medicine cost is 50% of the cost of treatment. Moreover, there are two issues which need to be addressed such as affordability and anti-competitive responses of companies. COVID-19 raised our attention level towards healthcare, he said. He highlighted some anti-competitive practices of pharmaceutical companies such as unfair pricings of patented drugs, pay for delay strikes, and keeping prices of generic drugs high and loss of innovation. Later, he asked other panellists to throw light on this subject.

Dr Joseph Wilson said that access and affordability in healthcare demands the focus on article 9 in Pakistan’s constitution and article 21 in Indian constitution which state “right to life and liberty”. This article lays the responsibility on the state that must provide basic healthcare services to individuals without compromising their dignity, he said. Here comes the concept of true competition and patent law is the crux of access to healthcare and affordability. He talked about the anti-cancer drug case “la Rouch Vs Cipla”
Ms Teresa Moreira started by thanking SDPI for conducting this session and said that UNCTAD is the focal point for competition law and policy since 1980 and for consumer protection law since 2015. She said that 10 years are left for the attainment of the 17th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) which is all about economic growth and development of member states but SDG 3 which is about healthcare should be considered in terms of access and affordability during this pandemic. Underlining the world competition policy in healthcare, markets always face the hurdle in a way due to the role of research and development in this market and intellectual property rights, she said. She said that the price of pharmaceuticals and medical devices are set through intervention of sector specific regulators. At the end, she said that there should be cooperation between the government, policy makers, pharmaceuticals and healthcare regulators to ensure healthy competition.

Mr Hardin Ratshisusu stated that excessive prices, pay-for-delay and unequal funding and facilities distribution among hospitals are the major competition issues in the healthcare sector in South Africa. In South Africa, we have investigated excessive pricing of a drug “Trastuzumab”. In 2003, a case was filed against ARV drugs by HIV/AIDS affected individuals who pleaded that the prices of these drugs are very high. The court permitted to provide license to generic manufactures and permitted them for transporting ARV medicines to sub-Saharan African countries in order to ensure accessibility and affordability of healthcare services to all the individuals, he elaborated. He said that South Africa has adopted intellectual property rights in 2018 with initial focus on healthcare. He concluded his arguments by recommending that policymakers, sector regulators and competition regulators should prioritize competition issues in the pharmaceuticals and healthcare markets to ensure pricing healthcare remains affordable.

Mr Allan Asher depicted slightly wide perspective of competition in healthcare in the context of innovation to sustainable development. He said that the performance of policies to healthcare and sustainability facing the issue of close convergence between the goals of competition policy such as maximizing rivalry between the competing providers to bid down the prices and bid up quality. He said that this topic has special silence for the past 5 to 10 years in South East Asian countries as there is a strong movement in every crisis to put healthcare into market situation.

According to Mr Asher, 25 years ago, in most developing countries, 90-95% healthcare services were not provided by private sectors such as private hospitals. Now the situation is reversing. Due to this, the competition has lowered down. Sadly, the policy makers have tended not to integrate the liberalization of healthcare with much stronger scrutinizing from competition and enforcement. Competition policy instruments should be used to prevent the inhibitory efforts of collective distribution and competition, he said.

Mr Asher said that distribution of coronavirus vaccine in urban areas requires cooperation between producers and distributors of vaccine authorities and for that purpose temporary competition laws are required. Justice is the need for government to modify the aspects of competition law to ensure that distribution works in public interest, he emphasized. He ended his discussion by stating that the competition law should be merged with consumer protection law. Moreover, probation in the competition law should be enforced in developing countries that can be achieved with good cooperation between the government and civil society.
### CONCURRENT SESSION C-4

**Climate Induced Migration in Times of COVID-19: A Case Study of South Asian Countries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chair &amp; Moderator:</th>
<th>Ms Zartaj Gul, Minister of State for Climate Change, Government of Pakistan (GoP)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Welcome Address:</td>
<td>Ms Maryam Shabbir, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Speakers:          | 1. Dr Abid Q. Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan  
                     2. Mr Sanjay Vishist, Director, Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSA), India  
                     3. Ms Raana Rahim, Country Coordinator, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), Pakistan  
                     4. Mr Harjeet Singh, Global Climate Lead ActionAid, New Delhi, India  
                     5. Ms Farah Kabir, Country Director, ActionAid, Dhaka, Bangladesh  
                     6. Mr Kashif Majeed Salik, Associate Research Fellow, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Panel Organisers:  | Ms Maryam Shabbir and Ms Khansa Naeem, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Report by:         | Nageen Sohail and Zainab Naeem, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan |

The session on “Climate-Induced Migrations in Times of COVID-19: A Case Study of South Asian Countries” focused on the impacts of climate change migrations on vulnerable communities of South Asia.

Ms Maryam Shabbir, Project Coordinator SDPI, introduced the prestigious speakers and the topic under discussion to the audience. She described that climate-induced migrations take place due to extreme weather events. Elderly people, children, sick and pregnant women, and adolescent girls are highly affected by it. Ms Shabbir said that pregnant women in South Punjab and South Sindh have faced a lot of issues and distress due to natural disasters. There is lack of privacy while healthcare facilities and education were not available to the migrants in those areas. Men were forced to leave their miserable families for work resulting in more burden on women.

Dr Abid Q. Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, thanked all the global audience for their virtual presence in SDC. He explained that migrations have become tougher during the times of COVID-19 as more restrictions are being faced at the cross-regional level. He suggested improving the resilience of the climate affected people to improve their lives.

Mr Kashif Majeed Salik, Associate Research Fellow, SDPI, highlighted the findings of the report on “Climate-Induced Displacement and Migration in Pakistan: Insights from Muzaffargarh and Tharparker Districts” which explores the links between floods, droughts and climate-induced migrants. The results showed that an increase in temperature, floods, and intense rainfall were the main reasons for the displacement from the South of Punjab. The resilience of people has reduced due to frequent floods in the last decade. He said that migration is a complex phenomenon including...
various factors for vulnerable communities.

Mr Salik said that the trend of seasonal migrations has intensified due to persistent droughts in the Tharparker district. People are forced to leave their lands and farms to settle in urban areas. Food security, lack of social security, less income, poor health conditions, lack of access to safe drinking water, reduced satisfaction, etc., are some of the major issues faced by migrants. Women, the elderly, and the sick are highly affected by it, he added. Some 50% of the total labour in agrarian fields of Punjab is women who are not formally recognized at the provincial or district level. He emphasized that we must focus on the development of rural areas to reduce the impacts of migrations. Mr Salik suggested the provincial governments and local institutions should provide training, information, and resources for community awareness on disaster prevention and preparedness. He also suggested improved access to health, education, and essential services to cope with climate change impacts, climate-resilient farming, and integrated water resource management. He advised the public and institutions allocate equitable representation in sectoral policies and plans, improve access to microfinance and agro-loans for rural lands, devise national and subnational level migration policy, implement migrant registration system of vulnerable migrant families, and revamp Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) response for extreme climatic events to improve access to food, medicines, and social security. He also suggested civil societies raise awareness of climate-induced migrations among local to national policymakers, promote post-graduate research programs in universities and research institutions, and collaborate on global and regional research.

Mr Sanjay Vashist, Director CANSA, highlighted the regional effects and disparities due to climate change-induced migrations in the times of COVID-19. Mr Vashist said that human rights are being violated due to erratic cross-boundary migrations between Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Pakistan where people are forced to leave their origin areas due to climate-induced migrations. He suggested to strengthen regional cooperation to avert climate-induced migrations. Mr Vashist suggested strengthening regional trade and energy so that the economic interests of the nations are not compromised over political interests. He also recommended that national institutions should introduce legal protection, social protection, and rural employment guarantee schemes. He suggested civil societies create mass awareness about prevailing conditions and sentiments of migrants. He also suggested South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) track random migrations and their causes at the regional level, formulate a legal framework for the social and legal protection of migrants, and keep its member states informed.

Mr Harjeet Singh, Global Climate Lead, ActionAid, India, shared global opportunities for connecting to international world for resilience building of climate-induced migrants. He said that climate change is playing its role in increasing distress migration across the globe. In 2019, 24 million out of 25 million global displacements were recorded because of natural disasters. South Asia is the hotspot of these migrations as one-third of the total global displacements were recorded in this region. While talking about recommendations by the UN assembly taskforce for displacement, Mr Singh said that external and internal factors of each region must be discussed as part of global solutions. South Asian countries must join hands for regional narrative for collaborations, formulation of strategic response guidelines, need of finances and technical assistance on this issue, he added. Mr Singh suggested strengthening research and data sources on migration to formulate evidence-based regional policies for migrants. He also suggested
collaboration for finance and capacity building of the migrants in vulnerable communities.

Ms Farah Kabir, ActionAid Bangladesh, highlighted the impacts of migration on gender. She said that women and girls are affected differently than men by migration. Escalation of harmful practices, such as child marriage, polygamy, and human trafficking, has resulted due to lack of social laws and social security for migrants, she added. Ms Kabir emphasized building regional narrative and initiatives for addressing economic and social losses of migrants on different forums for negotiations. She also advised governments to formulate short-term, medium-term, and long-term solutions for the issues of migrants. While talking about COVID-19, Ms Kabir said that many of the South Asian countries are youth dividend, however, their lives are in distress due to continuous migrations in rural areas during this pandemic. She suggested SAARC countries come together with a common narrative to manage natural disasters and improved resilience.

Ms Raana Rahim, Country Coordinator, ICMPD Pakistan, said that climate change and its impacts on migrations and mobility is the most profound injustice on millions of people across the globe which is being discussed at global forums. Poorest and most deprived communities are forced to leave their houses to avoid the impacts of climate change. Migrants move to shorter distances while some are forced to cross international borders. The temporary migrations are followed by the resettlement of migrants in their origin areas with no facilities, she added. She also discussed the disproportionate impacts on vulnerable migrant communities and women. She added that mobility and migration can help to reduce the vulnerability of the people, however, double or continuous migration can pose great challenges to the livelihoods. Ms Rahim suggested analysing mobility and migrations in the context of environmental factors. She also emphasized quality research in different regions for evaluation of the quality of life before and after migrations. She said that adaptation strategy, planned allocations, strong institutional framework, policy interventions to strengthen government departments can make migration a part of the solution to the impacts of climate change. While referring to COVID-19 migrants, Ms Rahim said that economic and health crises have increased for both internal and cross-border migrants. The international community is ready to provide technical assistance for capacity building and resilience of migrants of vulnerable communities.

Ms Zartaj Gul, Minister of State for Climate Change, GoP, appreciated the efforts of SDPI to take up the issue of climate change migration in Pakistan. Talking about the issues faced by climate change migrants, Ms Zartaj Gul said that overpopulated and unplanned metropolitans in Pakistan cannot absorb climate change migrants. She said that the water level in Southern Punjab has reached 1,200 meters below ground level resulting in no food and drinking water for people and their cattle. While referring to regional solutions for climate change migrants in South Asia, she suggested designing a collective approach irrespective of our political differences for improved resilience against impacts of climate change. SAARC and other regional platforms must incorporate climate change impacts and induced migrations in their agenda to bring global attention to this issue.

While talking about solutions to resolve issues of climate change migrants in Pakistan, Ms Zartaj Gul said that data sharing among think tanks should be ensured for eloquent collaboration on this issue. She also suggested designing new and sustainable cities like River Ravi front and Urban Development Project in Islamabad and Karachi for dislocated people. She stressed on sensitization of climate change migration for women who encounter social, financial, and health issues during displacement. She also suggested that the civil society should design legal protection framework for the migrants.
Mr Haroon Sharif, Former Chairman, Board of Investment, GoP, formally welcomed the speakers and guests. After detailed introductions of the panellists given by Ms Imrana Niazi from SDPI, Mr Sharif, was formally handed over the session moderation. Giving an insight to the topic, he said that our region is going through a major transition which is driven by economic connectivity led by China, with other countries also joining in.

This presents as a huge opportunity to strengthen knowledge and cultural partnerships, he said that if we want to strengthen the economic partnerships, we must engage our knowledge partnerships that underpin our sustainable foundation for economic partnerships globally. We often forget that markets and economies are groups of people who prosper in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. So, with this backdrop, museum is a place of knowledge and connecting the past with the present. It is a fascinating historical and cultural connection. In Pakistan, museums connect several old civilizations that have been active in this region. A museum is a place that has always been centred on knowledge and that is what Pakistan has been trying to leverage.

In Pakistan's case, we see an expansion of regional tourism. We are formally connected by road to China and Pakistan's Government has prioritised that they will use Pakistan's museums as a major attraction for tourism. Mr Sharif further said that in the past few years there is a huge interest in economic diplomacy from friendly countries like China, France, the UK, Qatar, and Japan. International organizations like UNESCO, World Bank, Arab World Institute, and the British Council all are helping us and on top of that all the local Pakistani institutes have also come forward to place museums at the heart of country's future connectivity and knowledge partnerships with the world at large with a focus on regional connectivity.

Sayed Zulfikar Bukhari, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis; and, Chairman, Pakistan Tourism Development Cooperation (PTDC), GoP,
highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on culture and knowledge through museums. He said that when the current Government took office, Prime Minister Mr Imran Khan, himself headed the tourism taskforce. Later, when Sayed Bukhari was assigned the responsibility, the National Tourism Coordination Board was established, example of which can be seen in other countries like South Africa where tourism is devolved into provinces. In the 18th Amendment, tourism also got devolved to provinces. The Board is now trying to create better coordination, plans, and holistic policies, and overall marketing and branding for Pakistan. After this board, we have PTDC which in the past played a vital role in tourism in Pakistan. Sayed Zulfiqar Bukhari continued that we are primarily looking at Lahore and Taxila Museums. Lahore Museum, working under an autonomous board, is still quite ahead of Taxila Museum. Talking about the National History Museum, he highlighted that museums are huge money-makers for the government. Sayed Bukhari shared that a summary has been passed, which has been agreed upon by the Cabinet to move Lahore Museum to Archaeology Ministry; it is currently under Ministry of Culture, which in Punjab is under Ministry of Information. This step will then be followed by revamping the board, by bringing in more representatives from the private sector, thus making it less bureaucratic.

He shared that the aim is to make both museums a tourists’ attraction and further investing to create an Islamic heritage museum by bringing in international investors. But that only will be done once the board is established and we actually have the policies of hiring and firing. What we do find is the reluctance of the private sector sometimes getting involved with the government sector, but once a museum becomes an institution, which every museum should be, issues of hiring and expenditures should flow very easily. He further highlighted that the Taxila Museum does not have an autonomous board and its completely run bureaucratically. Thanking Mr. Haroon Sharif and his team, he said that the proposition to establish a board for it has also been passed through the Punjab cabinet and once these things are streamlined, the private investors will then be invited. He added that along with this, government is revamping the Peshawar Museum and Kalash Museum and has further taken up upgrading of Abbottabad Museum and D. I. Khan Museum. Syed Bukhari added that in the next 18 months, these four museums will have international standards; they will generate money, pay for the salaries and will become an independent body with funds. Museums also have to be modernized and be made interactive enough for the youth’s attraction to keep them engaged for years to come.

Talking about the COVID-19 pandemic, he said that like every other country, "Pakistan was also hit badly but we are pleased to say that it was for a relatively short period of time. Our SOPs were adopted by a lot of other countries, even the World Health Organizations and World Trade Organizations also admired the SOPs Pakistan created this time for opening up during the pandemic. Sayed Bukhari also mentioned that along with the State Bank, short- and long-term working loans to entrepreneurs and hospitality sectors were provided so that they can get past the pandemic. A special window for financing along with the National Bank of Pakistan was also created for people and hospitality sectors. We reduced the interest rates varying between 15%-16% and instructed the State Bank to restructure their loans, and their debt servicing during the pandemic. We registered companies to be allowed to maintain foreign currency exchange accounts. This created a much easier transfer flow of foreign currency coming in and out of the country and it also protected them from fluctuation in exchange rate. We also offered packages for the construction of hotels’. He ended his speech by saying that they are now focusing a lot on pushing winter tourism across the country so that tourism would not remain seasonal and limited to summers.

Dr Karen Exell, Hon. Senior Research Associate, UCL, Qatar, who is currently based in Saudi Arabia, in her presentation talked about the role of museums as change-makers in relationship with the perception of a country because this is critical if we want to encourage international tourism but also in terms of thinking about tolerance within a country and building an understanding between populations. She said that museums are absolutely critical in achieving these tasks. While talking about the regional development of Pakistani museum as a change-maker she said that both Lahore and Taxila Museums have great potential but there is a lack of professionalism in the administration of museums in Pakistan and we need a huge investment and a clear vision to improve upon the current setup. She also talked about her Qatar Museum experience that the Government there has invested a lot in building their museums, but they did not have a professional museum sector and that begins with the training. Dr Karen Exell mentioned that for training in Qatar, she has set up a programme for students who get trained, and apply that training to the museum sector, this being the immediate impact of that training. Talking about Lahore and Taxila Museums, she said that both these museums are also targeted for intervention under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) components to enhance and promote the important role museums play in education, social cohesion, and sustainable development, as recognized in the UNESCO 2015 recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society.

She said that the museums’ components’ objectives are to enhance the awareness and reception of Pakistan’s diverse heritage; strengthening of Punjab’s cultural tourist circuit and foster a deeper sense of the multi-cultural narratives that exist within Pakistan’s visual and cultural heritage; setting up a dynamic and active museum culture also helps further cement the ethos of a present-day peaceful, pluralist Pakistan. Dr Exell maintained that the multiple outcomes will include economic growth and inter-communal tolerance and peace. She talked about the improvement plans for the museums that there should be a change in an ecosystem to get benefit from it. She concluded by saying that we need more training sessions and art
exhibitions through which we can open the door to the world. A knowledge-based economy with a long and rich history will give a voice of Pakistan to the world.

Dr Nadhra Shahbaz Naeem Khan, Associate Professor, MGSHSS, LUMS, Lahore, Pakistan in her presentation said that Taxila and Lahore Museums have been standing mute for a very long time and working as just storehouses, not as hubs for knowledge production and dissemination. Talking about the term knowledge ecology, she quoted the words of Yogesh Malhotra where he defines knowledge ecology as “just as natural ecologies thrive based on species diversity, knowledge ecology thrives on the diversity of knowledge… in knowledge ecology, the basis for cooperation and survival is differentiation and similarity between knowledge nodes” (Malhotra 2002).

She elaborated, if we can look at what these museums can offer and what is the purpose and use of these museums in terms of disseminating knowledge, we can classify them as education, collaboration, and communication.

Dr Khan said that focusing on education itself, these museums can become informal education providers for all ages and classes focusing on history, historiography, physical and human geography, sociology, anthropology, and politics. The idea is that these spaces can become active hubs of informal education, unlike a passive teacher-student relationship, and informally provide bits of information that can be relayed in a story-like format, as simple tales, or as ideas that are already a part of our knowledge system and memories. They can be highlighted and be re-communicated as ideas that already prevail in the society but have long been forgotten. She continued that these long-forgotten traditional pedagogical systems that are embedded with lessons and directions for changing the society in the right direction. We have all grown up reading these small details that had a tiny bit of moral lesson at the end.

Our museums, especially the Lahore and Taxila Museums both have an exquisite collection that can be used to highlight many messages. We can bring back Sheikh Saadi’s and Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi Hikayat, while people generally know of these, but they are not in the mainstream anymore. We can start working on fables, these manuscripts are in the museum’s collections and there are several other forms and formats in which similar stories are still present and they can be revisited, revised for the general public to come and learn and take away beautiful lessons and thus making these museums hubs of informal education and exchange of knowledge. The common element these two museums have are the relief panels depicting early life of Buddha that are known as jothika’s and what they narrate are the generous acts that Buddha performed, acts of sacrifice that finally led him to his Buddhahood. She further said that the rich collection of objects in the Lahore and Taxila Museums can be a fantastic source to revise old stories and add several new ones to this long foreign depository. The characters and situations presented in these tales can be used to develop indirect didactic material for a variety of disciplines targeting all age groups. She continued that museum collection can also help us develop material to educate our masses about energy and water conservation, safeguarding whatever remains of our jungles, and growing more trees to improve air quality in urban centres. Museum gift shops can offer concrete business opportunities to craftspeople, product developers, and designers from fine jewellery, earthenware, stone crafts, furniture pieces and costumes, stationery, trinkets, and much more. A warm and welcoming museum environment that promises learning and entertainment opportunities to everyone will dramatically increase the visitor numbers. She concluded by saying that we must plan to cater to the perceptions of identity and belonging of the future generation of Pakistan, especially the ones that are living abroad, and getting a chance of knowing one’s own culture and history would give them the sense of rootedness and pride of what their own culture and civilization has to offer. So, Pakistan and the world cannot wait to see both these museums turning into dynamic hubs of knowledge creation, augmentation, and dissemination.

The last speaker was Mr Qasim Jafri, President of Board of Governors of Goethe Institute Lahore, Member Foreign Minister’s core group on Cultural Diplomacy, and Member Board of Directors of Tourism Development Corporation. Mr Jafri in his speech said that we have domestic tourism to start with and before we leap out to other continents like North America, let us talk about the region. We have also done some work on it with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Talking about religion and culture, he said that we have potential and a long list of countries like Japan, Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Nepal, and Bhutan, who are willing to invest and discover our region. Instead of talking about it, we need to work on it. We are seated on a treasured truth of civilization like Mehrgarh which we tend to forget about, it is probably the oldest civilization going back to 7,000-8,000 years, remanent of which are still around in Balochistan and people do not even know about it, so we need to work on it [in terms of preservation and promotion]. He continued that we also have Katas Raj which we need to develop [for tourism purposes]. There is a whole lot that can be done in this regard which in many ways is connected to museums. He stressed that in our efforts [to promote tourism] we need not destroy our natural environment in the name of development. Giving the example of Naran, he said that the way the hotels are built there on both sides of the road has adversely affected the natural beauty of the place. Something needs to be done about future development otherwise there will be another concrete jungle instead of a real jungle or a forest. He concluded by saying that we have a lot that we can really take advantage of and also educate our own generations about their ethos, history, and their cultural background.

Mr Sharif formally concluded the session and thanked the esteemed panelists for their time and input.

CONCURRENT SESSION C-6

Tobacco Greenwashing: Misinformation / Disinformation in the Times of COVID-19

Moderator: Syed Ali Wasif Naqvi, Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Chair: Dr Nosheen Hamid, Member National Assembly & Parliamentary Secretary National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination, Government of Pakistan (GoP)

Speakers:
1. Mr Waseem Iftikhar Janjua, Project Lead for Tobacco Control & Senior Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan
2. Mr Nadeem Iqbal, CEO, The Network for Consumer Rights Protection (NCRP), Pakistan
3. Mr Khurram Hashmi, National Coalition for Tobacco Control - Pakistan, CTC-Pak, Pakistan

Panel Organisers: Mr Waseem Iftikhar Janjua and Mr Syed Ali Wasif Naqvi, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan

Report by: Sadia Ziafat and Arsalan Ahmed Raja, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Islamabad, Pakistan

Syed Wasif Ali Naqvi, Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, welcomed and introduced the esteemed panellists and explained in detail the topic of Tobacco Greenwashing and how smoking is causing various diseases and impacting the health of individuals during COVID-19 as well. He highlighted how the viral disease of COVID-19 affected lungs, respiratory track and cardiovascular diseases have a direct relationship with tobacco smoking. Resultantly, tobacco products have been subjected to regulatory bans and some countries for instance, South Africa have put a ban on tobacco smoking with legal action taken against violators and tobacco users. Whereas, in Pakistan despite terrifying health effects, we have allowed to continue its manufacturing even during the pandemic. Tobacco industry has responded by engaging in greenwashing tobacco products and polluting the scientific knowledge basethrough misinformation and disinformation. Through various funded research and misinforming the public about tobacco use and its impact, these interest groups are diluting healthy climate indoor agendas.

Mr Waseem Iftikhar Janjua, Project Lead for Tobacco Control & Senior Research Associate, SDPI, Islamabad, started the discussion on his study by giving an overview of tobacco smoking history. He said that tobacco is a product which is killing one of its two users. The global pandemic has necessitated a closer look at the impact of smoking on individual’s health and responded to green washing activities by the tobacco industry. Greenwashing is the cynical attempt by the profiting industry to market their products as environmentally friendly. The focus is to convince general public that tobacco industry is actually engaging in the environment friendly and healthy activities. This is achieved through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). He then explained the concept of infodemic, which is a combination of information and epidemic. During pandemics it is harder for people to find trustworthy sources of information and guidance and within this foggy environment, tobacco industry has found an opportunity and strategized to spread the infodemic and green washing practices.

Mr Janjua further added that CSR and sustainability reports are additional methods to greenwash the tobacco products. Smoking is associated with severity of disease and death in COVID-19 patients. He recommended that there is a need for tobacco control policy. Best practices of several countries like Australia, Ireland and many other countries should be adopted. He added that every level of policy formulation should be free of industrial influence and there should be transparency in policy making and implementation.

Mr Nadeem Iqbal, CEO, The Network for Consumer Rights Protection (NCRP), Pakistan started the
discussion by saying that it is a very well-established fact that tobacco industry has been involved in greenwashing and there is no doubt about it. He mentioned the product Velo, which is a nicotine product, and it is available everywhere in the country without any stringent regulations. He highlighted that it is produced in Europe and imported to Pakistan and sold for PKR 100. It is promoted as a safer product in the world, but our policies should encounter the misinformation and disinformation and they should be separate from commercial interest of the tobacco industry. Mr Iqbal added that during COVID-19 the debate has now become about nicotine. There is a mix research coming out, where some are saying nicotine is good against COVID-19 while some are indicating adverse effects. We need to highlight what exactly is happening at this front. If we look at our laws, they are not addressing nicotine (use or sale), instead they are just talking about tobacco-based nicotine. It could have multiple other sources. Similarly, if we go through history of tobacco industry in Pakistan, we see pre- and post-Resident Foreign Currency Deposit Account (RFCD) ratification. On supply side we need to see from farmers side, how to replace tobacco with other products. He said that 12% population of this country, which are cigarette users, are not being addressed, and we are not providing them with alternatives to quit smoking.

Mr Khurram Hashmi, National Coalition for Tobacco Control - Pakistan, CTC-Pak, Pakistan said that they have been working on tobacco industry regulations in Pakistan since 2008. We have seen that while we were working with federal government to strengthen the policies and legislations, the industry started to focus its attention to influence the policies from backdoor and to influence the market through its attractive marketing strategies. He said that tobacco industry is the greatest challenge in combating tobacco not just in Pakistan but also globally. During the pandemic when health sector is facing greatest challenges, the tobacco industry is flooding the market by sending its products in very attractive packaging. He said that we need to protect tobacco control policies from the commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry.

Dr Nausheen Hamid, Member National Assembly & Parliamentary Secretary National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination Pakistan, while chairing the session, said that we are one of very few countries, which has appropriately reacted to pandemic during the first wave. She said that the government is analysing the policy tends that how tobacco is affecting the lives of smokers, their families and co-workers; and as scientifically proven, the health effects are deadly. She ensured the audience and panellists that the government will take steps at policy level to counter the trend of greenwashing that attempts to portray the product as environment friendly. She acknowledged the fact that tobacco industry is growing, and it was able to open a new factory in Sahiwal in April during COVID-19 pandemic. She applauded the efforts of SDPI to hold this conference session on such an important topic and issue prevailing in society.

The global pandemic has necessitated a closer look at the impact of smoking on individual's health and responded to greenwashing activities by the tobacco industry. Greenwashing is the cynical attempt by the profiting industry to market their products as environmentally friendly. The focus is to convince general public that tobacco industry is actually engaging in the environment friendly and healthy activities.
The session was formally started by Ms Rabia Tabassum where she introduced all the worthy speakers and shared the agenda of the session on “Cultural Diplomacy in the Times of COVID-19”. The session Moderator was Dr Fatemeh Kamali-Chirani, Visiting Research Fellow at SDPI.

Mr Hamayoun Khan from FES shared a friend’s experience about COVID-19, perks of diplomacy and cultural diplomacy in COVID-19, that cultural diplomacy is not something only related to COVID-19, it is an ongoing process and has many important aspects. There is interaction with people from different countries, we hold different bazaars, introduce our food, clothes, handicrafts and exchange gifts. So cultural diplomacy is not only done by diplomats but also the businesspersons, civil society members, and university teachers who used to go from one...
place to other countries and introduce their version of culture. Mr Hamayou Khan further added that there are different programs in other countries through which we tell them about our culture, show them our manufacturing capacity and what we are capable of. But now COVID-19 has made us rethink that the traditional aspect of that cultural diplomacy is no more there. We used to meet each other face-to-face but now we cannot do that, which has made us realize how important was culture and how we are missing it. This situation has made us realize to develop empathy since the borders are closed and we must cooperate more and more, which was quite the opposite of what happened in November 2019 when instead of cooperating we started gaming, Donald Trump stopped funding other countries, instead of other European countries, Germany and China cooperated in this pandemic. COVID-19 also taught us that climate change is a very important phenomenon and if we do not have any solution, we would have many other dangerous times heading towards us. We need to realize that this is not the last pandemic that we are going to see. Population exploitation in South Asia and Africa is also a major concern as a growing population is destroying habitats. One of the major aspects of cultural diplomacy which has always been very important is freshwater, which is depleting, and we have to focus on that. For getting through all these challenges, we need to work together. There would always be a competition as we have seen in terms of providing vaccine to world population, but it can be a healthy competition.

Ms Anupama Sekhar, Director of Cultural Department Asia-Europe Foundation, Singapore, discussed recent trends of cultural diplomacy and how they must be promoted. She said that in the last decade we have moved from self-promotion nations to values promotions. Countries are always trying to positively influence the leaders of other countries by showing their soft power through their movies, sending their artists abroad to perform, promoting tourism and trade, setting up regular channels for exchange of culture between countries, including partnership and trade. But in the last 10 years is a new word, "cultural relation", which has increasingly been used in lexical of diplomacy. Cultural relation is showcasing our relations through cultural diplomacy and cultural exchange by opening doors and providing access to artists and cultural professionals from other countries. Since the last decade, cultural diplomacy is going in a new direction and we have seen many new countries enter the frame. The most classic example is of the Korean wave, the K-pop or Korean soap operas is the power of cultural diplomacy. It is not only countries that have been doing cultural diplomacy, we see many new players: private foundations, civil society networks and organizations are also beginning to play a very important part alongside countries in cultural diplomacy and this has raised new question that can governments and artists work together with a common vision to promote cultural diplomacy? There has also been an instant multilateralism in the last decade and this year we have heard that the current pandemic crisis at the vaccine nationalism that we are witnessing, may perhaps lead to sudden setbacks in the gains that we have made in multilateralism in the last years. Bilateral relations have always been the cornerstone of cultural diplomacy, but this new form of multilateral engagement has several advantages for instance the European Union National Institutes of culture started working together. So, in terms of the objectives of cultural diplomacy we are slowly seeing a shift towards cultural relations as we are moving from self-promotion to values promotion. Values promotion are more of the values of mutuality and respect of meeting as equal partners, it is not just about artists from one country going to perform in another country and then returning home, it is about artists from the two countries collaborating to establish benefits for both sides. The Asia Europe Foundation, which is essentially an organization promoting multilateral cultural, follows the gaps in cultural relations and try to do projects that respond to these gaps under the website of culture360 helping many artists in South Asia and other areas of the world. Ms Anupama Sekhar concluded that we need to increase mutual understanding among us especially in this pandemic, and there is more need for mutual conversations and mutual understanding.

H.E. Andreas Stadler, the Austrian Ambassador to Malta, emphasized that we need to persuade each other that cultural diplomacy is in fact or should be the antidote to the problems that we are currently facing. It is important to note that COVID-19 is the first big international crisis where we did not have the United States of America as a leading multilateral force which is new to all of us. Its withdrawal from global responsibility which we have nowadays and while we face the COVID-19 crisis we are also facing all the other crisis all by ourselves like the climate change crisis. The crisis of cultural cooperation and mutual understanding is itself challenged by identitarianism, which is yet another virus plagued over us since 2016, the year in which Donald Trump also became president. This identitarianism is pushed against what we celebrated before multiculturism. It was only 10 to 15 years ago when no one was questioning whether multiculturism is a good thing, being common together is a good thing, and diversity is a good thing. Ethnic integration was something we would like to embrace, while maybe five to 10 years ago this notion we had was so positive but has changed and all of a sudden in many countries multiculturism is not considered something rather perceived as something dangerous, something that will disturb and damage our identities. The idea of exclusion is becoming more and more important in the USA. The speaker further quoted the charter of UNESCO 1946: “The purpose of our organization is to contribute peace and prosperity by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture to further universal respect for justice for the rule of law and human rights and fundamental freedoms which are confirmed for the people of the world without distinction of race, sex, language or religion by the charter of the United Nations.” This is the solid foundation of anything in international relations that deals with cultural cooperation or cultural promise and this has been challenged today by identitarianism. As we are an
We are facing a human-made crisis of international relations that people who just simply do not believe in it all stand according to the UNESCO charter - this is the uphill battle that we are engaging with. The cultural diplomacy can help but we must also be aware that the problem is cultural cooperation on the lower end of hierarchies in disciplines of international relations. What comes first is the ideology of realism and is the idea of power playing of antagonists in this world where politics and support efforts are more important than anything else. We see antagonism everywhere, between the USA and China, between the USA and Russia, in Pacific, in Europe, in Armenia and Azerbaijan where lives of 1,000s of people were lost over a territorial war, we are witnessing huge migration and refugee crisis.

Hierarchy of disciplines in international relations has been imbalanced, it is the military first, it is political supremacy first, it is identitarianism first and idea of culture and education had been side-lined. This is our task, we have to come back with good argument, we have to again focus on this charter of UNESCO and United Nations that is about cultural diplomacy, academic and scientific values, enhance mutual understanding, try to mitigate antagonism, try to reinvent values of compromising and mutual understanding and do exactly that had been so successful after the World War II. We need to go again look in the direction where we put hierarchy of international relations and values on the top. We strongly need to appraise the identitarianism attempt all over the world to culturize power conflict and this is because people perceive one culture superior and another inferior.

We should celebrate human dignity with education and culture to get culture as an antidote. In answer to a question, he suggested that we can adopt multilateral approach to achieve global agenda.

German Ambassador in Pakistan, H.E. Bernhard Schlagheck shared his views about the necessity of cultural infrastructures for continuing cultural diplomacy in time of crisis. He stated that culture has been, and it can be seen almost everywhere severely affected by COVID-19, in the political sphere, the financial sphere and even in the mental sphere.

He said that he perceives the culture as a sort of antidote in a crisis like this. It is a saying that in times of crisis we need more culture, and this is probably being over optimistic. Soft power certainly remains important particularly in times of crisis but particularly in times of crisis remains an ordinate to the immediate policy challenges for health, social systems and financial structures. So perhaps we can say is that there is no antidote without culture, because culture may contribute significantly to ease and outgrow not least the psychological outgrowth of a crisis or pandemic and cultural diplomacy or to take that onboard. When strong tendency to digitalize cultural expression existed before, the crisis had certainly and distinctively accelerated the development of new forms of cultural diplomacy. For instance, German Embassy in Islamabad celebrated quizzes, photo competition.

Digital diplomacy is how to put that at least nearly as effective and successful as traditional forms that is very important to be able to rely on the ground and tested mostly non-digital cultural infrastructure as we have here in Pakistan as in many other countries in South and Southeast Asia. Moreover, German businesses are also keen to back up their commercial interests within community related cultural engagement. These activities are not only a reflection of German culture but also ought to take up social realities and trends in our host countries not least its various local and artistic communities as well as pressing global issues like climate change and so on. Lastly the German foreign cultural approach is steadily moving from self-promotion towards a great distraining of common cultural barriers which is quite well underpinned in the German system because we have a separation between the diplomatic missions abroad and our financially state financed but project wise independent cultural institutions. He concluded that the crisis has certainly shifted focus and orientation of German cultural policy and diplomacy.

Mr Daryl Copeland from CGAI and CERIUM, UMon, Canada, was not present in the panel live because of time difference between Quebec and Islamabad. An interview with him was shared in the panel. He said that science and culture are undervalued at so many levels for so many different reasons. They are both important vectors of soft powers. There are no military solutions to wicked problems. There is no tool for promotion of science and culture when it comes to enlarging empathy, and encouraging people’s connections. These are sources of activity that we should weave into a fabric of civilization. There is too much emphasis on hard power and military and too little emphasis on soft power such as culture and science.

World is building coordination and networks in cultural and science diplomacy. We need to strengthen our economy in such a manner that people do not encounter subordinate obstacles in trying to achieve their goal. If development is not long term and human centric then it is not development.

Dr Sehrish Qayyum presented her paper on the ‘Conspiracy Theories in the Time of COVID Crisis: A Causal-Comparative Analysis of Global Power Politics and Importance of Cultural Diplomacy’. In her presentation, she discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic has been followed by many conspiracy theories since its outbreak in the city of Wuhan, China - from whether it is a lab-created virus; due to 5G network and device usage; or involvement of Bill Gates to control the world; seen as a biological war tactic of the United States against China, or a scheme by business
Ms Rubina Ali presented her paper on ‘Chinese Health Diplomacy during the COVID-19 Pandemic’. She discussed the five dimensions of health diplomacy which are negotiating for health in the face of others’ interests, negotiating governance, improving relations through health, creating alliance for health outcomes, and contributing to peace and security. She said that health diplomacy is very important during this pandemic as this disease does not have any boundaries and is an issue for the whole world - so we need a global health policy which can provide peace and security. She further added that in health diplomacy the countries formulate the health diplomacy, e.g., China through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is encountering infectious diseases and it is also a massive health initiative which has provided assistance to many countries as more than 64 countries are connected through the BRI and almost 70% of the population is connected with this project. China has strengthened the disease control capacity by cooperating with many other countries. China is also supporting WHO which is the chief coordinator after the outbreak of COVID-19. Through health and silk road, China is enhancing and strengthening its national policy as well as improving its image in the whole world.

Moderator Dr Fatemeh Kamali-Chirani, Visiting Fellow, SDPI while concluding the session said that cultural diplomacy is needed because the world needs collaboration and coordination to solve the problem. Cooperation and development will not happen if the development organizers do not convince people culturally. We need to move on from self-promotion to value promotion; and coordination for sustainable development. If you do not have cultural infrastructure or long-term partnership with other countries, then digitalization cannot help that country, concluded the moderator.
Dr Shoaib Akhtar from FJWU, Rawalpindi, Pakistan opened the session and said, “During this pandemic we have seen a lot of changes in the businesses, especially the small and medium enterprises, that faced bankruptcy and loss of jobs all across the globe. However, where challenges emerged, opportunities have also sprung up. We have seen how small businesses have transformed themselves and become digitized. He said that such transformations make us think about the future of these organizations and what human resource policies they are going to adopt for future.

Engr. M. A. Jabbar, CEO of Qaim Automotive Manufacturing (Pvt) Ltd, Pakistan chaired the session. He pointed out the economic challenges faced by the Federal and provincial governments even before COVID-19. Pakistan did not have research-based information in making fiscal adjustments during the first wave of pandemic. While narrating his research findings, he said that most of the money went to the large-scale manufacturing activities where collaterals existed. Loans worth six hundred and ninety-two million rupees along with mark-ups were provided at the national level, but the beneficiaries were the established groups. At the regional level, he experienced a gap in research-based information shared on entrepreneurial activities during the pandemic, while at international level the role of WTO during this pandemic remained apathetic. Innovative industries during COVID-19 and specifically the people from lower income groups diminished. Supply chains for small business survival were disrupted because of non-stable import side. He recommended that the government should work for stability of small and medium enterprises to lift them during this crisis.

Dr Anwar Shah, Associate Prof., QAU, Islamabad, Pakistan, discussed his paper on “An Alternative Approach for Understanding the Dynamics of Developing Economies...
from Policy Perspective". He said that funds are the most important requirement for entrepreneurial business survival during crisis. He classified funds into four types:

- **Risk free capital**: Funds that are available only for investment on ex-ante fixed sure return.
- **Risk bearing capital**: Funds that are available for investment on ex-post unsure return (profit/loss sharing).
- **Soft loans**: Funds that are available for short term without an ex-ante or ex-post return, but on the principle to be returned on demand.
- **Philanthropic funds**: Funds in the form of charities and donations that are available for free without seeking any return even of principal.

Out of all these four funds, all three except risk free capital funds are needed by an economy for entrepreneurial business survival during COVID-19. He further highlighted the challenge of information about the availability and existence of these funds. Also, only 33% funds are being dealt through banks and formal institutions, but we have no formal institution to deal with 67% of available funds that exist in Pakistan’s economy. Therefore, he focused on the idea of collecting information on transfer of 67% funds by developing formal institutions. Engr. M. A. Jabbar agreeing with Dr Anwar Shah said that the political instability of country is diluted by these philanthropic donations. He said that 34% of taxes collected from Karachi alone are from philanthropic organizations.

Dr Khizran Zehra from TiSEM, Tilburg University, Netherlands, shared her views on “Resourceful Behaviours among Micro Entrepreneurs in Pakistan: Pre and Post COVID-19 Scenarios”. She said that resourcefulness is a function of reciprocity in the local community that empowers entrepreneurial activities and also the community at the grassroots level. The adversity of COVID-19 can impact the well-being of individuals, organizations and communities. In her research, she analysed entrepreneurs from Rawalpindi and Islamabad of Afghan origin and Hazara community. She said that collaborations are a resourceful strategy to lift entrepreneurial activities. Now in case of COVID-19, small entrepreneurs are trying to be resourceful again by altering their business concepts and by coming online. Online marketing, social media, and freelance working has increased during this pandemic. However, for the entrepreneurial business sustainability, local entrepreneurial ecosystems should be promoted. Universities can play an important role in creating local entrepreneurial ecosystems. A culture of celebrating entrepreneurship should be introduced. Relevant academic training will play a significant role in this regard. IT support is also crucial in trainings and facilitation. All micro entrepreneurs should be educated enough about patents and other quality standard measures. Also, there are no proper platforms for e-payments, hence micro entrepreneurs have to work on cash on delivery. So, we need to think about proper secure payments with the involvement of banks.

Mr Tahir Mahmood Chaudhry, Ovex Technologies and PIE, Islamabad, Pakistan, said that before COVID-19 the pace of digitalization was very low. However, the pandemic changed everything, and the academicians started to adopt online mode of learning/teaching. Previously no educational institute was working on this system in Pakistan so, there was a need for trainings of teachers and students. He emphasized on the fact that this is a new world now, we have to mould ourselves and tune to this new system. He said that e-health system is a new way to get diagnosis. Connecting doctors and paramedics with patients remotely is the new normal. We have to understand our limitations and strengths to learn new things and change our mindset. Due to COVID-19 related constraints, restaurants are now taking orders online and delivering at home. “Iqracity” software is a net meeting software made by Pakistan which is an example that how opportunities can be availed even during crisis. He further elaborated the prosperity of online software like Zoom, which boomed during this pandemic.

Prof. Dr Kamariah Ismail, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, discussed the price index of Malaysia from July and August which was reduced to 1.4% while consumer spending in Brunei increased to 2.1% according to the Department of Economic Planning and Statistics Brunei. Prices of food and non-alcoholic beverages increased by 2.5% while non-food prices increased by 2%. According to the DEPS at the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the
rise was largely attributed to increase in prices and costs of miscellaneous goods and services by 11.4% and transport by 1.6%. Brunei is a small country where most food is imported from Malaysia. Due to COVID-19, the movement of food to Brunei is limited. Moreover, all of Malaysia’s major airlines have initiated salary cut ranging from 10% to 100%. Tourism industry and cancellation of hotel rooms in Malaysia impacted a number of workers which were laid off due to COVID-19.

She also pointed out that overall credit card spending was down to 12% in retail food sector of Malaysia. Malaysian government took a number of measures to mitigate these problems. The Prihatin Rakyat (Caring for People) package was introduced on 27 March 2020 with an additional stimulus package which aimed to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Micro businesses in Malaysia contribute two-thirds of the workforce and 40% of economy that amounted to 260 billion Malaysian Ringgit (MYR). Banks, Ministry of Entrepreneurial and Cooperative Development, People’s Trust Council (MARA), an agency under the Rural Development Ministry, along with other government agencies, provided moratorium to small, and medium sized enterprises starting from 1 April 2020 till September 2020.

MYR 20 billion worth of financial stimulus package with the intention to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 was devised based on three major strategies:

- Lessen the impact of COVID-19.
- People based economic growth.
- Encourage quality investment.

This is to aid and stimulate travel industry, ease cash flow and provide support to affected individuals. Giving discounts of up to 15% in electricity bills for hospitality industry, airlines, hotels, shopping malls, travel companies, exhibitions and contention centres was initiated. Around 6% service tax exemption for hotels and companies engaged in travel was provided. Reorganizing of monthly payments of income tax for vacation industry and rental premises was provided also.

In April, Brunei announced a special monthly allowance for healthcare workers, nurses, doctors, volunteers, etc. She said that we should encourage local tourism industry and online micro businesses during the times of COVID-19.

Mr Shamim Ahmad Khan, member of SDPI Board of Governors and Chair of Finance Committee, GoP, concluded the session and thanked all panellists for their contribution in the matter of entrepreneurial business survival in Pakistan. He also said that we should not underestimate or undervalue the support of the central bank to Pakistan during the time of COVD-19.

**Concurrent Session C-9**

**Psychological Impact in the Time of COVID-19 and its Implications for Sustainable Development**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Chair:</th>
<th>Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq, PML-N leader</th>
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<td>Moderator:</td>
<td>Dr Zarqa Taimur, Spokesperson, Government of Punjab, Pakistan</td>
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| Speakers: | 1. Prof. Dr Shakil J. Malik, Sussex Institute of Neuro Psychiatry, Islamabad, Pakistan  
2. Dr Connie Meijer, Consultant Psychiatrist, The Netherlands  
3. Dr Anjum Bashir, Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service, Basildon, UK  
4. Ms Daanika Kamal, Queen Mary University of London, UK |
| Panel Organiser: | Ms Sana Malik, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Report by: | Amina Khalid, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan |

The session revolved around the discussion that on the one hand we are dealing with this deadly pandemic and on the other we have to deal with the consequences posed by it and take essential measures to maintain our mental and emotional health. This requires support of people around us because the world may not be the same again after this pandemic. **Dr Zarqa Taimur** said that psychological problems and their consequences in terms of mental health like stress, anxiety, depression, frustration, and uncertainty have emerged during the pandemic around the globe. This needs to be recognized as a public health priority for both authorities and
policy makers. She urged the panellists to uncover the facts of this pandemic on mental health, caused by the lifestyle changes, and put forth some suggestions and recommendations to deal with this. These will ultimately aid in coping with such major public health disasters from happening with regard to developing resilience and psychosocial support strategies during this time of new normal.

Prof. Dr Shakil J. Malik gave a generic overview of psychological impacts of COVID-19 on global population and its consequences for sustainable development. He specifically talked about the macro-level effects of pandemic in the context of Pakistan. He considered COVID-19 as a highly fear-provoking illness which not only caused psychological illnesses among people but also destabilized the whole socioeconomic system of the country. Appreciating the government policy of smart lockdown, he said confinement and incarceration have its own fear-provoking consequences. He emphasized not to convert social distancing into emotional distancing otherwise the social system may collapse.

Dr Malik also encouraged to devise mechanisms at the local and indigenous levels based on some scientific and credible data that will ultimately help in decision-making. So, in this regard, techniques like horizontal epidemiology and social scaffolding should be employed before Pakistan evolves country-wide systems for health. A forward-looking approach to designing healthcare that fully incorporates social factors should be an important focus of future interventions.

He added that the fear of loss at certain level may be beneficial as people get motivated to do things for their survival, but when it goes beyond a certain limit, it becomes toxic and causes massive fear leading to panic. Sometimes people start behaving in an uncivilized way which destroys the social system completely. It has been witnessed that in Pakistan and other parts of the world people started defying the request of social distancing that led to the problem of governance in the country during this pandemic era. So, it is the responsibility of media and other authorities to disseminate credible information. Any directive coming from the government and authorities must be based upon scientific data using psycho-social techniques of latest statistical models and based on ground realities.

Dr Connie Meijer said that this is an abnormal situation on a scale the world has not witnessed before. Previous large epidemics/ pandemics were on a different scale and/ or in a different time. Despite this being a global epidemic, the situation is different for every country. High exposure to COVID-19 leads to more burnout.

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According to him, vaccine is a light seen at the end of the tunnel and we need to follow that light (hope) instead of considering the depressive news daily. While talking about the anxieties and fear among children, he emphasized that there is no need to medicalize the anxieties of people. Anxiety and fear are not always negative and are perfectly normal reactions to the situation posed by COVID-19. Listen, support and act accordingly. Recalling the estimate of World Bank that 120 million children in South Asia will be pushed to poverty, he urged the authorities to invest in reducing the consequence of epidemic and make efforts to reduce the disadvantage in education as well. He also encouraged to look at a support program like Mera Ghar, Mera School, a volunteer initiative started by a female activist in Balochistan in her house with the concept of social distancing.

Ms Daanika Kamal focused on gender-based violence and its implications on sustainable development. She said that since the outbreak of COVID-19, all types of violence against women and girls (particularly domestic violence), as well as child marriages have increased in Pakistan. In fact, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) has been one of the most neglected outcomes of the pandemic. Moreover, legal recourse and services available for victims are currently inadequate, and thus, worsening their plight. She said that according to police reports, there is a 25% increase in GBV in Punjab and there is a 50% increase in unpaid care work recorded in 2020. She said Sindh has reported 10 cases of Karo-Kari (honor killing) registered only in the month of March in 2020.She said that city-wide lockdown and self-quarantine meant that many women and children were stuck at home with their abusers. The virus has been used as tool by abusers to regain the lost control to inflict physical, emotional or psychological abuse. So, the pandemic compounds gender inequality because it added the burden of care work arrangements that deprive women and girls particularly of the time and resources needed for their education, skills development, and financial independence.

Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq appreciated SDPI for organizing the session around the theme of COVID-19 and its effects on mental health. She said that healthy population is the pre-requisite for sustainable development of any country. In our society, there is not only the fear of pandemic but also the fear of losing jobs, inability to bear the hospitalization cost, change in lifestyle and impact on life of people due to socioeconomic factors.
The session started with an introduction by the Engr Ahad Nazir from SDPI. He deliberated that COVID-19 induced lockdown and brought businesses in Pakistan to a standstill. The Government of Pakistan came up with initiatives and a package of around USD 6.5 million to facilitate business losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic for micro, small, medium and large enterprises. However, the informal sector was not able to get facilitation from these schemes. The informal sector, which is estimated to be around 30-50% of the formal GDP, and provides employment opportunities to over 60% of the country’s workforce was not made part of any financial packages.

There was a realization that identification and targeting of informal units is difficult as it is stretched from primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy including agriculture, livestock, fisheries, mining to small-scale product development, local food processing and services sector, including transportation and hospitality industry. During the SDC, Dr Hafiz Pasha estimated that 70% of the informal sector has been displaced resulting in job loss and around 40% of the informal sector jobs lost are those of women.
This also affects the formal sector since anecdotal evidence suggests that most of the vendor and sub-contracting industry is informal. With a recessive trend in the economy, directives of International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the extended fund facility, and Government's own will to expand the tax base through formalization of entities, it is important to discuss the various special challenges to the informal sector, especially considering the COVID-19 scenario.

This panel discussion was conducted with the following objectives:

- Examine the special challenges pertaining to the informal economy in Pakistan in general, and during COVID-19 in particular;
- Understand legislative, policy and administrative efforts that may be required in the coming year to address the challenges of the informal economy;
- Explore what role provincial governments could play to support informal enterprise; and,
- Understand how development partners can help the government improve the overall understanding around the informal economy in Pakistan.

Mr Hashim Raza, CEO, SMEDA, Lahore, Pakistan in his remarks as Chair said that gender disparity needs substantial focus with regard to the recovery work being done for COVID-19. He particularly mentioned two governmental COVID-19 response programs, namely “Mazdoor ka Ehsas” and Electricity Package, that Government of Pakistan launched through SMEDA. The first program covered 1.18 million people by spending 18.5 billion dollars while the second one was allotted 310 billion dollars. Mr. Raza also identified data unavailability of informal sector for requisite program design and budget allocation, lack of identification of people in informal sector, and failure in targeting the huge informal population as being the main challenges faced by Pakistan. He stressed on reducing the cost and risks and increase the incentives for formalization alongwith making sure that becoming part of the formal economy is easy.

Dr Siddharth Sharma, World Bank South Asia Chief Economist Office, Washington D.C, US said that more than 80% of employment is related to informal sector in South Asia. In the current COVID-19 situation, informal wage sector is the most adversely affected as the impact has fallen on bottom half of informal sector. This is because of the fact that informal sector cannot yield huge benefits in the short run as in this sector, workers have zero to very little trend of savings and investment and hence are vulnerable to any economic shock. He said, while the poor have suffered severely during the crisis, many informal workers in the middle of the income distribution have experienced the greatest drop in earnings with most of the affected lacking any social insurance coverage. The crisis has shed light on the complicated structural problems in the informal sector that require redressal. He recommended the South Asian governments to provide short-term relief, for instance liquidity support, and long-term social protection programs focused on the informal sector. In short-term, he suggested that expanding reach of social assistance program is really important while in long term, re-designing of social protection system is required for better performance in future crisis and expansion of the social insurance.

Mr Rafay Khan, World Bank Office, Islamabad, Pakistan talked about informality in Pakistan from a two-pronged approach, covering both demand and supply side roles. In public role, he mentioned that the causes of informality have not been much discussed and researched. While on the government role, the fiscal or monetary policies for betterment of economy do not apply to the informal sector as they are not documented anywhere, so the primary focus here should be to separately incentivize informal sector because 92% enterprises working in Pakistan are informal and 90% of the employment is provided by informal sector. He further stressed the women empowerment angle stating that around 90% of working women are in informal sector and need to be incentivized.

He pointed out that the government needs to internalize that informality challenge and should aim at innovating the traditional fiscal and monetary policies and reach out to the informal sector. This lack of inclusion of the informal sector has led to the good measures taken by the State Bank of Pakistan's failure in providing liquidity support to survive the crisis and ensure job survival. He further stressed the importance of giving the informal sector, the requisite enabling environment. He recommended that in the short run, Government should give firms the liquidity support to survive any crisis; in medium term, Government should work on building their resilience, digitization, support informal sector in seizing new trend while in long run, social protection systems need to be redesigned to be made more inclusive, including by leveraging technology and big data.

Ms Samar Hasan, Epiphany Pvt Ltd, Islamabad, Pakistan talked about the gender aspects in informal sectors as informal sectors account for a lot of women including the home-based women entrepreneurs. She stated that according to the 2017's labour survey, 71% of labour associated with informal sector in Pakistan consist of women and over 75%belong to the rural areas with zero to little protection of labour rights and low or minimum wages. These are probably the most important challenges in our informal economy. She highlighted informal sector as the major economy driving sector as she gave an example of Daraz.pk which is contributing a lot to our economy but most of the sellers at Daraz are not formal sector entities. She further stressed that the informal sector can benefit from the opportunities provided as COVID-19 relief or any relief project, but many of them are probably not aware of these schemes or might not have the proper guidance available for availing these relief initiatives. One example is the exclusion of informal sector from the digital payment systems. The relevant departments and ministries of the provincial and federal governments need to focus on digital empowerment and awareness of the masses especially of women and rural population.

Mr Abdul Qadir, Independent Development Sector Practitioner, Pakistan deliberated that the informal sector from the perspective of working people.
He mentioned informal sector as the one where human rights are not fulfilled or where no social rule is applied. He further stressed that Pakistan is not providing job incentives in formal sector thus suggested to provide incentives to informal sector in order to protect labour rights as in-formalization of formal economy is dangerous.

Ms Azeemah Owais, Ain Shams University, Cairo & University of Stuttgart, Germany said that urban development is driven by economic development and economic development is a process of improving economic wellbeing, quality of life, building local wealth and diversifying the economy. She talked about urban development in informal sector during COVID-19 by sharing her research on urban development in informal sector of Karachi. Her presentation included case studies of informal textile units in Karachi.

She recommended that the management of a large city, like Karachi, requires structural policies, and role from all levels of the federating units. Furthermore, she stressed on the development of the existing industrial zones rather than the establishment of new zones.

1 Based on the definition of State Bank of Pakistan: Any firm or production area having less than 10 employees is informal.

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**CONCURRENT SESSION C-11**

**Urban Water Governance Post-COVID-19**

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<tr>
<th>Chair:</th>
<th>Ms Kanwal Shauzab, Parliamentary Secretary for Planning Development &amp; Special Initiatives, Government of Pakistan (GoP)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Moderator:</td>
<td>Dr Imran Saqib Khalid, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentations by:</td>
<td>1. Ms Simi Kamal, Hissar Foundation 2. Ms Fatima Akhtar, Nestle-Pakistan 3. Dr Sharon Moran, State University of New York, USA 4. Dr Faisal Haq Shaheen, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panel Organisers:</td>
<td>Dr Imran Saqib Khalid and Mr Abdullah Khalid, SDPI, Islamabad; and, Nestle-Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report by:</td>
<td>Sundas Shafique, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan</td>
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Dr Imran Saqib Khalid said that the session was organised to thoroughly discuss the problems related to water availability, its distribution issues, and their possible solutions. He said that lack of attention to watershed and ecological wellbeing, mere focus on infrastructure and dams, lack of sanitation and insignificant co-operation in various stakeholders are the root causes of poor water governance.

Ms Simi Kamal focused on combined efforts to mitigate the problems related to water governance. She affirmed that climate change has a significant impact on hydrological cycle and there is a need to adopt an integrated water-climate approach. She added that increased urbanization has disrupted the natural water cycle. Referring to Karachi’s water issues, she said that solid waste in streams and drains pollute the water and cause urban floods. She recommended to have integrated efforts for clean water availability and clean drainages.

She said that a constant, regular and meaningful engagement of government is required in this regard, and only an unprejudiced involvement of all parties can help the country to prosper. Highlighting the necessity of multiple agreements and policies at different levels, she said that there is a need to leave no stone unturned to resolve issues of water governance.

While drawing attention towards inter-disciplinary approach, Ms Kamal said that there is a need to include multiple aspects in governance of water and involve professionals. She necessitated direct connection between policy makers and consumers to identify gaps and to avoid resistance in enactment of policies. Talking about the role of gender in water governance, she foregrounded the involvement of women as they have more potential to deal with water crisis. She emphasized on strengthening the local municipal government and collaboration of various sectors to involve large communities by working at small-medium scale. Contrary to dams’ construction, she stressed the need to focus on fixing the existing infrastructure rather than waiting for heavy funds to build new ones. Along with surface water, she recommended to govern groundwater. She also highlighted the need to utilize green and grey water to curb water scarcity.

Ms Kanwal Shauzab delivered special remarks on the importance of sustainable water management in the country. She initiated her discussion by highlighting the hindrances to achieve SDG 6 in Pakistan, including lack of water reservoirs, practicing of old techniques and inefficient long-term planning. She said that inclusion of multiple water authorities distorts the cohesiveness in management and conflicting policies cause ambiguity in implementation, so it is high time to accelerate the dialogue between all stakeholders and escalate action on water governance. She added that during COVID-19 pandemic, water scarcity has increased, and water security is essential to avoid calamities in future. Discussing the adequate availability of clean water, she focused on practicing market-based management strategies for affordable access to WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) in Pakistan. To avoid water wastage, she called for a real-time water metering system in the country. She accentuated to give water an importance and alter the mindset of society through campaigns and media and develop pragmatic solutions. Discussing about restorative measures after the pandemic,

Ms Shauzab suggested linking urban planning and solid waste management with water governance for efficient and economical outcomes. She also emphasized on consistent collaboration between public and private sector, especially at the local level, to adequately utilize the resources. Dr Sharon Moran focused on the hierarchy of water governance system and compared the situation of the USA with Pakistan. She said that though the USA is a developed country, people there also face the same problems as in Pakistan, including water pollution, technical issues and misconduct in water distribution. Answering a question related to the implementation of policies,

Dr Moran said that lack of planning as well as naïve public-private partnerships have affected water governance across the globe. She focused on sophisticated collaboration between all shareholders for sustainable water governance. Illustrating the situation in the USA, she suggested adopting innovative strategies at the local level depending upon the local terrain and social practices. Dr Moran gave some aspiring remarks for the efforts after pandemic. She said that water unites people and there seems to be a potential for attention on water-related issues after the end of global crisis. She insisted on alliance of all working bodies without any sort of discrimination to get enduring results. She also talked about environmental justice to reduce the exploitation of resources and ultimate balance in communities.

Dr Faisal Haq Shaheen focused on the incorporation of green infrastructure to reduce water damages in urban areas. He spotlighted to manage stormwater for improving water quality and reducing urban floods. He suggested developing structures to avoid floods in cities. He also recommended that mechanisms should be devised to treat grey water to overcome water shortage. While speaking about water governance at the local level, Dr Shaheen said that there is a need to strengthen local utility sectors both financially and legislatively. He emphasized on the involvement of all community actors along with media for evolving the mindset of society. He also stressed the need for bridging the gap between academia and practitioners to encourage innovation related to water recycling.

He recommended involving students in data collection and to formulate sustainable models for the good governance of water. Dr Shaheen devised some post-pandemic strategies for water governance. He called for adopting the digital transformation in water sector for an unbiased sharing of data among all authorities and continuous monitoring of water distribution and consumption at the local level. He also suggested involving health sector and solid waste management with water governance for evolving the mindset of society. He also stressed the need for bridging the gap between academia and practitioners to encourage innovation related to water recycling.

Ms Fatima Akhtar emphasized the need for collective action for water governance by all the stakeholders, including public and private sector, media as well as academia. She initiated her discussion by sharing the efforts of Nestlé related to water management and the initiative “Caring for Water” which aims to reduce strain on water. She added that the programme has three pillars to fight water challenges; first is water stewardship
in factories; second is the involvement of communities to address water-related problems and devise suitable solutions; and third is related to agricultural supply chain to reduce water loss.

While answering a question about water stewardship, Ms Akhtar said that all the four factories of Nestlé are Water Stewardship certified and water is used sustainably in these factories. She said water from milk is extracted and used in other processes. She further stated that Nestlé is also tackling the issue of plastic pollution, which is causing water quality issues.

**CONCURRENT SESSION C-12**

**Financial Inclusion of Women in Pakistan – Developing Gender-Responsive Financial Inclusion Models**

*In collaboration with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Pakistan*

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<th>Chair:</th>
<th>Prof. Dr Aliya Hashmi Khan, Member, Prime Minister’s Economic Advisory Council, Government of Pakistan (GoP)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Moderator:</td>
<td>Dr Fareeha Armughan, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan; and Ms Sundus Munawar, Embassy of the Netherlands in Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest of Honour:</td>
<td>Ms Sima Kamil, Deputy Governor, State Bank of Pakistan</td>
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| Presentations by:                         | 1. Ms Fauzia Viqar, CEO, Rah Centre for Management & Development (CMD), Lahore, Pakistan  
                                          | 2. Ms Corianne van Veen, Sustainable Finance Officer (SFO), FMO- Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank, The Netherlands  
                                          | 3. Ms Shumaila Rifaqat, Head, Innovation & M&E, Karandaaz, Islamabad, Pakistan  
                                          | 4. Ms Roshaneh Zafar, MD/Founder, Kashf Foundation, Lahore, Pakistan |
| Panel Organisers:                         | Ms Sundus Munawar, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Pakistan; Dr Fareeha Armughan and Dr Sajid Amin, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Report by:                                | Sadia Ziafat and Arsalan Ahmed Raja, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad, Pakistan |
Dr Fareeha Armughan, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, introduced and welcomed all the guests on behalf of SDPI and thanked the Embassy of the Netherlands for collaborating with SDPI. The chair of the session Dr Aliya Hashmi, Member, Prime Minister’s Economic Advisory Council, GoP, officially opened the session by introducing the Guest of Honour and the esteemed panellists and thanked them for their presence. She said that there is an important nexus between financial inclusion of women in Pakistan in the context of regional and international development backdrop and role of women in economic empowerment.

H.E Mr Wouter Plomp, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Pakistan said that in Pakistan, there is a big difference between women and men when it comes to access to financial services like having a bank account or taking out a loan from the bank. He highlighted the importance of bridging this gender gap, which can significantly reduce poverty and empower women. He stressed on the fact that these issues can never be solved unless women are taken on board for policy discussion and policy formulation.

Ms Sima Kamil, Deputy Governor, State Bank of Pakistan, who joined as the esteemed Guest of Honour, highlighted the efforts of the State Bank for financial inclusion of women in Pakistan under the national financial inclusion strategy. Regarding women as account holders and their ownership, she said that according to data, currently there are around 11 million accounts, while their target is to have 23 million active accounts by the end of financial year. She said that the State Bank is working on training women with regard to financial literacy. She highlighted that the State Bank is launching a framework next week, which focuses on reducing gender inequality. State Bank is also focusing on gender lens concept, which will help in looking at solutions through a gender lens. Ms Kamil said that efforts are made to make women successful in all sectors including savings, loans, payment and insurance sector and bringing sustainable changes to bring women in the financial sector. She said that data is very important to take the necessary steps and currently we do not have gender disaggregated data. So we are working on gender specific data that can help in designing policy measures in a better way. In this regard, the State Bank is also working on a policy forum where they meet regularly to get input from various stakeholders pushing for sustainable changes in the financial sector.

Ms Kamil commented while answering a question regarding State Bank’s efforts in banking sector that some commercial banks are taking women financial inclusion very seriously which is positive for women entrepreneurs, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs). She added that we are moving towards digitalization and reforms to make documentation and lending processes easier. She also highlighted how the NGOs and civil society’s engagement and interaction with the State Bank can help in making financial inclusion interventions successful due to knowledge sharing.

Dr Aliya Hashmi said that financial inclusion is important and the manifestation of women’s inclusion at all levels in Pakistan beginning from the top at the decision making and then filtering all the way down to household level, is the key for long term sustainable development. She highlighted the constraints women face while raising their voice on policy forums in Pakistan where changes are needed in terms of agency and the bureaucracy structure giving more autonomy to women in terms of decision making for them. Dr Hashmi said that another issue that needs to be addressed is the data collection issues and segregation challenges as they lead to wrong calculations especially in informal economy sector and for proper implementation of programmes like Ehsaas along with upcoming programmes that focus on women empowerment.

Ms Shumaila Rifaqat, Head, Innovation & M&E, Karandaaz, Islamabad, highlighted the role of Karandaaz for women entrepreneurship. She highlighted that according to the World Bank estimates, Pakistan has lowest rate of women entrepreneurship at 1%. According to the World Bank Report, women ownership of businesses and firms is at 12%, and this is partial ownership not complete ownership. She continued that the asset ownership stands at only 4% of assets. She explained that the numbers reflect why women entrepreneurship is so low in Pakistan.

Ms Rifaqat appreciated the recent policy shift and focus of regulatory policy measures by the Government and the State Bank for women empowerment in the country. She highlighted that the real success measure is delivery and that should be focused on policies and the policies should be long term leading to success. She highlighted how Karandaaz is helping women grow businesses and also tacking financial inclusion of women through a two-pronged approach. She said that the challenge is dealt by one program that supports technological solutions and the program deals with the direct investment in financial channels for empowerment.

Ms Rosshanez Zafar, MD/Founder, Kashf Foundation, Lahore, highlighted the efforts of Kashf Foundation for women development. She said that the scope of women’s work and contribution in economy is very vast and data shows that 85% of women are involved in some kind of economic activity including microfinance on the model of Grameen Bank. She said that there is a lack of recognition for women’s contribution in economy and that pushed Kashf in designing programs to help empower women and also to change the existing mindset. She highlighted how social change and mindset is a focal point of Kashf initiatives. In this regard one of the programmes at Kashf is using social media and social networks to increase access of women products to markets and to empower them financially. Ms Zafar said that we have a huge opportunity with technology and digitalization for empowering women especially by focusing on how we can enable access to finance and access to market faster through technology.

Ms Corianne van Veen, Sustainable Finance Officer (SFO), FMO - Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank, The Netherlands, highlighted various initiatives for women empowerment in Pakistan. She said that there is such a great demand and scope for women investing in various sectors in Pakistan. Ms Veen said that we are also focusing on collaborating with those companies and are looking to
financially support women in their business plans. She said that one of our core strategies especially after COVID-19 is building back better and learn from this experience to design more innovative and comprehensive policy strategies that ensure women and all vulnerable sectors’ inclusion in economy.

Ms Fauzia Viqar, CEO, Rah Centre for Management & Development (CMD), Lahore, said that it is important to emphasize and address social determinants of financial inclusion for women first, if we want to achieve success from the technological revolution. She said that the women’s employment rates have gone down which is alarming and due to lack of basic education, automation and digitalization is actually negatively impacting women employment in poor and developing countries. She continued that the social demographics including literacy rate, enrolment rates, labour market percentage, are also important determinants including the disparity that needs addressal to move towards financial inclusion interventions. Ms Viqar recommended that the Government needs to formulate and implement gender inclusive policies at all levels for success of initiatives and empowerment of women.

Dr Aliya Hashmi concluded the session by thanking all the participants and acknowledging the efforts of SDPI and Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for bringing to the panel important aspects of developing gender responsive policy reforms for financial inclusion of women in Pakistan.

SPECIAL PLENARY
Sustainable Development in the Times of COVID-19: Message from the President of Pakistan, H.E. Dr Arif Alvi

Transcribed by:
Ms Tayyaba Hanif Maken, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan

Dr Abid Q. Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad Ladies and gentlemen! Welcome to the Special Plenary of Twenty Third Sustainable Development Conference (SDC), where we will be addressed by His Excellency the President of Pakistan Dr Arif Alvi. It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 23rd edition of Sustainable Development of Conference, which is being held in ‘a new normal setting this year, i.e., virtually. Honourable President, I am thankful for your patronization of thinking community in general and Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI’s) annual Conference in particular. We have fond memories of holding the Inaugural Session of our 22nd Annual Conference (2019) at the Presidency (Aiwan-e-Sadr) under your worthy guidance. This year too your esteemed office had very kindly accepted our request to hold in the Inaugural Session of the 23rd SDC in the Presidency but due to increase in number of new infections of COVID-19, we had to opt for a virtual mode.

Your Excellency! I am glad to report that this year we are hosting 36 sessions and 9 plenaries over the 4 days of Conference. We are covering a wide area of subjects and themes including economy, health, education, social protection, climate change, gender, foreign relations, literature, museum and tourism etc. Including the speakers from Pakistan, we are joined by 235 speakers, 61 international speakers from 26 countries. We have speakers from Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Brunei, Canada, China, Ecuador, Germany, Hongkong, India, Nepal, Nigeria, Saudi Arab, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the Netherlands, the UK, and the USA.

Your Excellency! We are discussing Sustainable Development in the Times of COVID-19 this year. We are mindful of the fact how this pandemic has disturbed global agenda of achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. World over the pandemic has resulted in loss of precious lives, loss of livelihoods, forcing millions of students to stay away from their classrooms, lack of access to healthcare for non-COVID-19 patients and the impact goes on. At the beginning of the pandemic, international experts warned of three crises, health crisis, global economic recession, and food crisis. Alhamdulillah! Pakistan fared extremely well on all three fronts [as] compared to our peer economies. I am sure that your excellency would be commenting upon strategies of Pakistan’s response to COVID, which turned as a success story in balancing lives and livelihoods.

Your Excellency! Vibrant nations turn challenge[s] into opportunity[ies]; under your able leadership, Pakistan has got the opportunity to embark upon the opportunities that are coming up with this pandemic. I am referring to the digitalization of our lives that spans from economy and governance to how we do business and socialize. I can recall from your inaugural address last year that you had advised to get prepared for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, thanks to your guidance, today Pakistan is more prepared to respond to COVID-19 than many of our peers. Here, I would also like to mention that to curve food holding and to facilitate food security related decisions, SDPI with the support of The International Development Research Centre (IDRC),
Canada and The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), UK has developed a food security dashboard, which would be inaugurated by the worthy Prime Minister [of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mr Imran Khan] by the end of this month. This is our humble contribution to be part of the solution during these testing times.

Honourable President, SDPI would compile the recommendations of our conference and would forward to your esteemed office for your kind attention.

I once again, thank you for patronizing the cause of sustainable development in Pakistan and assure you our full research support in accomplishing Government of Pakistan’s mission of leaving no one behind. Ladies and Gentlemen,

H.E. Dr Arif Alvi

Ladies and gentlemen! Assalam-o-Alaikum!

It gives me immense pleasure to address the Twenty-third Sustainable Development Conference organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute. I would like to congratulate Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairperson, Board of Governors (BoG) and Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, the Executive Director of SDPI.

Last year, I inaugurated the Twenty-second Sustainable Development Conference and it seems it was decades ago. The biggest change that has happened [since then] is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has not only affected Pakistan but the world. It has affected societies, the poor much more than the rich; it has affected poor countries much more than the rich [ones] curtailing the development progress. However, it has opened a new avenue, a new era, whereby [there has been an] increase in outreach because of digital transformation, which has been anchored by COVID-19 in many ways. The world may not have been excited about the digital communication as it became during the COVID-19, when people could not move around. The digital transformation, which may have taken a decade, has happened within a year but that opens a lot of options. The inflow and the outflow of knowledge through the internet for health facilities and education has also become a major boon to countries which cannot afford to build brick and mortar institutions.

I believe that the COVID-19 challenge is an enormous challenge, it also has a lot of opportunities and those opportunities is where sustainable development issues of the world have to be looked at. Development means that we should be uplifting our people from poverty in the poor countries by providing them with health [benefits], education and welfare. Pakistan has done tremendous work in starting the Ehsaas Programme by which more than half of the population was provided help to fight the COIVD-19 pandemic. It worked wonders as far as we are concerned because we took care of the poor in the society. It is important because that is what the Constitution of Pakistan talks about (and) that is what every government throughout the world talks about. Despite the COVID-19, Pakistan ensured that our poor were taken care of. Pakistan ensured that its macro-economic change continued, in fact our balance of payment got better, our exports rose, and our imports reduced, which we consider of significant importance, and the macro-economic changes are guiding Pakistan toward a better society. Alongside, the Prime Minister [of Pakistan] has ensured construction packages, which will give employment. All these efforts have been taken despite of the pandemic, and I believe as far as development is concerned, these will be of great help.

Societies which progress in the world are those which are inclusive. Exclusive societies maintain exclusion when it comes to the elite and the poor in the society. Inclusive societies provide and ensure work, education, and health facilities for the entire population. In Pakistan, whatever we have done in response to COVID-19 pandemic, whatever efforts we have made to reach out to the population, they will help us continue to provide benefits such as health care to the masses once things normalize. For countries like us, prevention is the key; countries that cannot afford curative approach to health, prevention is the key. I believe we have established structures of communication by which through different modes we have been able to reach the grassroot level of our society. At the same time poverty alleviation and development is related to educating the population; COVID-19 presented opportunities [for education] beyond the brick-and-mortar school and universities set-ups. This opportunity has allowed one to reach out to the people in the least expensive manner, as the outreach through the internet is much cheaper than the ability to multiply [education initiatives] in brick-and-mortar setups.

I believe all of your discussions must have been informative. I believe Pakistan will keep on learning from its own experiences and from countries and from societies which have done better in the past century in trying to lift up their people. Along with all these initiatives, we have to ensure the
fact that they are environmentally and ecologically sustainable. That is where responsible governments, responsible media as well as responsible institutions come to play their part that all this development is not at the cost of increasing [carbon] footprint of man in this world. I have a lot of hope for Pakistan.

During the COVID-19 situation we have shown resilience and strength. We have shown that despite COVID-19, GDP has not gone down as compared to other countries, we have shown that despite COVID-19 our ability to ensure health and education outreach has existed. We have shown that despite COVID-19, our sustainable development efforts may have slowed down but [there were] no major setbacks.

Ladies and gentlemen! I thank you for participating in this Conference and I believe all your deliberations will help in a stronger, more forward looking, more emancipated Pakistan. Thank you.

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri

Thank you very much worthy President! Of course, your support, guidance and your patronization will remain a driving force for independent policy think tanks such as SDPI. We take pride once again to be part of the solution and we will keep on providing these solutions. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen for becoming a part of this Special Plenary.

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**Dialogues Plenary:**

**Health in Times of COVID-19**

*Dedicated to former SDPI Colleague & Friend Mr Zia ur Rehman*

**Host:**

Dr Abid Qayium Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

**Moderator:**

Mr Syed Ali Wasif Naqvi, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan

**Reflections on Mr Zia ur Rehman life and personality by the family and colleagues**

**Special Remarks:**

Dr Palitha Mahipala, WHO Representative/Head of Mission, WHO Country Office, Islamabad, Pakistan

**Speakers:**

1. Dr Kanza Batool, Health Practitioner, National Health Services, UK (Video Message)
2. Prof. Dr Shakil J. Malik, Sussex Institute of Neuropsychiatry, Islamabad, Pakistan
3. Dr Minhaj us Siraj, Joint ED, Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), Islamabad, Pakistan
4. Dr Rashid Naeem, Physiotherapist, Islamabad, Pakistan

**Concluding Remarks by the Guest of Honour**

Dr Nausheen Hamid, Parliamentary Secretary Health, Government of Pakistan

**Panel Organiser:**

Mr Syed Ali Wasif Naqvi, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan

**Report by:**

Rida Ahmed, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan

Mr Syed Ali Wasif Naqvi welcomed all the speakers as well as the participants and formally introduced the speakers. He highlighted the efforts and contribution of Mr Zia ur Rehman who remained an active member of team SDPI. Afterwards, Mr Rehman’s elder sister and brother-in-law shared some memories. His sister said, “His personality will always shine in our hearts”. Mr Nautash Zia, son of Mr Zia ur Rehman, gave a comprehensive account of his father’s life. He said that he had an exceptionally difficult life as Mr Rehman’s father got ill when he was young, so he had to work in order to support the family.

He worked as a tutor, then learned the work of an electrician and worked as one, got training to repair refrigerators and ACs and also got pathology lab training and started working at a famous laboratory in Islamabad as a lab assistant. He did not give up on his studies whilst he was
working which was an arduous task in itself. Realizing the importance of social work, he also worked as a relief worker and joined Pattan Development Organization. For eight years till 2007, he worked with SDPI as an assistant Urdu editor.

In 2005, he presented his publication regarding farmers in a conference held in Indian Punjab. He did not stop with his studies and did M.A. in Punjabi from the Punjab University. He also had the experience of working with WaterAid, Islamabad. His daughter, Ms Alishba Rehman, shared a presentation encompassing some beautiful memories of her father and the places he visited in the course of his exceptional life.

Mr Saddique Khan, his colleague from WaterAid, said that it impressed him a lot that Mr Rehman had started with a humble beginning and went to the heights of success through his hard work. He described him as one with an amazing personality as well as a professional being. Moreover, he said that his life shows that it is not primarily the formal training or education but an inner drive that a person has to build his life and also that of the others. After that, Mr Rehman's brother-n-law, Mr Abbas shared an e-book that is soon to be available. The e-book named ‘Memories of Zia ur Rehman’ compiles the comments and memories shared by the colleagues of late Mr Zia ur Rehman.

Dr Palitha Mahipala said that more than 73 million COVID-19 cases have been reported globally. He added that stress is a remarkable impact of COVID-19 which disturbs our sleeping and eating patterns. He said that the new normal as a result of COVID-19 needs new habits concerning psycho-social well-being of people. He added that we need to think differently and creatively about our health. WHO urges the world to cooperate with the governments and follow SOPs so that the virus can be prevented from spreading further.

He also said that governments should develop novel supply chains and it would be fruitful to engage the private sector also. Responsibility of ensuring health should be seen as an individual one. Lastly, he mentioned that we must protect our healthcare workers.

Dr Kanza Batool while talking about the measures that need to be taken in the wake of the virus said that healthcare workers and the government have to work together. She said that mass testing should be introduced in Pakistan like the one being practiced in UK. Moreover, a track-and-trace system needs to be put in place so that the COVID-19 patients as well as those having a travel history can be traced until they are confirmed to be virus-free. She added that media and the government should work on awareness programs where importance of social distancing can be highlighted. Another important point that she discussed was the stigma that surrounds the idea of self-isolation. She recommended media and the government to initiate awareness programs to eradicate this stigma as well.

Prof. Dr Shafiq J. Malik said that everybody knows that COVID-19 is a droplet infection and spreads when people come in contact with the body secretions such as sneeze and cough of other people. The only way, he said, to lessen the spread is to break the chain of contact. Hygiene measures can be taken which are not even expensive. He added that we need to concentrate on basics in this case and not focus on tertiary measures only. Resources need to go where they are most needed so that it can make a difference to those millions of Pakistanis who do not have access to basic health facilities. He emphasized that we need to have properly ventilated consultation offices so that healthcare workers can be saved from getting infected while performing their services. He said that rather than arranging more and more ventilators, we should find ways to increase the manpower that can administer the already existing ones. Preventive health care needs to be established. Regarding self-isolation, he said that we have come up with an integrated approach so that there's a change of mindset and the emotional health of the person isolating as well as their family is not compromised.
Epidemiological modelling needs to be done in Pakistan and we need to have innovative ways of supporting our population. Moreover, we also have to keep an eye on deaths occurring from other illnesses. He finally said that forums like the SDC can help bring a change for the good.

**Dr Minhaj us Siraj** elaborated on his and the team’s experience about COVID-19 at PIMS. He said that the first wave was not very lethal, but the second wave has resulted in a high death ratio of patients. He added that we at PIMS resort to ventilators as a last step and try to suffice for the patients’ oxygen need by using oxygen beds, non-rebreather masks and other safety measures that need to be taken care of in this regard. He said that most people do not go to the hospital when they have COVID-19 out of fear some myths such as that doctors are injecting the virus into patients. He also mentioned the difficult experience that health workers had with the relatives of COVID-19 patients as he said, “Relatives get abusive when the patient’s condition starts deteriorating.” He said the virus spread among staff of the hospitals mostly through hostels and cafeterias which were then closed to bring the number down. Lastly, he focused on an important element that people must realize that we have to live with such infectious diseases and we need to learn our lesson and observe all the precautionary measures.

**Dr Rashid Naqvi**, a close relative and who was the primary attendant of Mr Zia ur Rehman at the time his condition was deteriorating, shared his experience of facing enormous difficulties when Mr Rehman needed basic facilities. He said that the government should appoint staff in hospitals who are experienced in technical training. Health authorities should involve multi-specialty doctors’ team for COVID-19 patients.

**Dr Nausheen Hamid**, Parliamentary Secretary Health, expressed that in these unprecedented times, everybody is doing their best to cater to the crisis at hand. She said that although the government is trying to do its utmost to provide facilities and upgrade the health systems, unfortunate incidents are still happening. Nevertheless, if we look at steps that the government has taken in the past year, it started with acquiring diagnostic kits. It had started with one PCR in NIH and now there are over 150 labs all over the country. Now the country is manufacturing its own kits, PPEs and N95 masks which were never there before. Training of doctors to use the PPEs has been done in special training sessions for which the doctors came from China. She added that the government inducted over 2,500 oxygen beds all over the country.

The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) platform has been much appreciated by the world in which all the data is compiled, and decisions taken on a daily basis which are then disseminated to all the hospitals in the country. The policy of implementing smart lockdowns by the government was quite successful in the first wave but unfortunately in the second wave, the compliance of SOPs has reduced. She said that public gatherings are really damaging the situation. There is a need for public cooperation in order to fight the crises together.

**Dr Abid Qayium Suleri**, Executive Director, SDPI thanked the panellists and participants and observed one minute silence with reference to the Army Public School, Peshawar, massacre in 2014.
On 16 December 2020, a Special Plenary was organized Remembering the Life and Work of Dr Lubna Chaudhry, paying tribute to a former colleague at SDPI and professor at the Binghampton University of New York, who left the world on 12 August 2020. Family, friends and colleagues from across the world were invited to speak and share their memories of her.

The Special Plenary was divided into four segments reflecting her life and contributions: her school and university days; her days in Hawaii; the time she spent in Pakistan; and, her time in the USA. The session was chaired by Dr Saba Gul Khattak, former Executive Director (ED) at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Special Remarks: Dr Saba Gul Khattak during her opening remarks shared that Dr Lubna Chaudhry left us all very early because of her autoimmune disease. This session was particularly for her daughter, Noor, who should know who her mother was and how she contributed at large. It is always difficult to talk about a person who is very dear to you. A personality who was so alive, generous and honest. Her zest of life was loved by all. The sustainability of SDPI's SDCs is a living example of her untiring work. Another contribution as being the head of recruitment committee at SDPI, she hired the present ED. She was inclined towards studying local, indigenous and organic knowledge system rather than opting for the western knowledge. The objective of the plenary was to remember Dr Lubna Chaudhry as a human being, mother, teacher, friend and as an activist who strived for the rights of the suppressed.

School and University Days:

- Ms Tanvir Kiani recalled her childhood memories and how they spent their days at the college. The spirit of activism was visible at an early age. She was against social injustice prevailing in the system and advocated for the right. Being a bright student, she was an avid reader and always inclined towards English literature. She being the eldest child was a support system to the family. She expressed how heart-breaking it was to lose an irreplaceable, true and genuine friend.
Ms Nabila Zar was with her at the Punjab University and to whom she was an inspiration. She was an enthusiastic person and always fought for a just and equal system. She was a very fashionable person who was very energetic and always participating in every activity. She recalled how once she fought for a fellow student who was subjected to harassment by a faculty member. She was a person who was caring and always inclined towards to reaching out to help others. Days at Hawaii:

- Prof. Dr Huma Ahmed-Ghosh, a friend from her days in Hawaii in the 1990s, remembered her as a young, bright, sparkly and creative person, who brought smile on everyone's face with her warmth and affection. Despite her sickness she was energetic and was a force of positivity.

- Mr Rajib Akhter, Dr Lubna Chaudhry's husband, recalled how fond she was of her time she spent at SDPI. They met in 1989. Recalling his early meeting with her, Dr Chaudhry gave him his first lesson in gender equality at a restaurant and from there it all started. The spirit of activism prevailed in her throughout the 31 years of their marriage. In 1997 they got married, and in 2004 they were blessed with a daughter which was a miracle due to her health issues. The bond of friendship sustained in their marriage. She was very passionate about her research and her sickness did not hinder at all. Time in Pakistan (2000-2004):

Dr Farzana Bari recalled her radiating and positive energy. Dr Lubna Chaudhry was full of life, warmth and love. She was very passionate about social change. In 2012, when protesting Zafran Bibi case and her right, Dr Bari recalled how she was subjected to police torture but that did not stop her from pursuing activism and standing up for the suppressed faction of the society. Despite her sickness, she never paused and kept on pursing for equality.

- Dr Shahrukh Rafi Khan shared that Dr Lubna Chaudhry was a giver at large and she contributed to institutional building. She was an innovative researcher, who mentored many aspiring researchers and scholars, and who are carrying forward the torch. Her contribution to SDPI cannot be forgotten.

- Dr Foqia Sadiq Khan shared that her philosophy of life was different from others. She took her work very seriously and always gave a supporting hand to others. Her passion for research and field work was vibrant.

- Dr Kaiser Bengali lamented that the time spent with her was short; but that it is the quality of time not the quantity of time. With her the conversations were different; the liveliness of her personality took off everything. Her persona emitted her values, which showed her genuineness with a superior intellect.

- Dr Haider Nizamani said that speaking about a friend in a past tense is disorienting. By the end of 2001 in SPDI, we met and out of her generosity she welcomed and embraced us as a friend. The energy she emitted was so positive and it radiated within the social circle of hers. A famous quote from Simone Weil, “attention is the rarest and purest form of human generosity”, is the reflection of her personality.

- Dr Sajid Kazmi recalled that his relationship was different as he was considered a younger brother. The time spent in the field for a project was the best time as she was always caring for everyone. Her fondness for music was vibrant as reflected in her personality. When leaving Pakistan for the US, she gifted him a music system which he still has. Her compassion for activism prevailed in her personality.

- Mr Asad Naqvi said she was an inspiration. Her academic depth was vibrant in her personality. Despite every odd, she always took the first step in transforming others. Discussions with her unfolded different dimensions of the society which reflected depth of her knowledge; and that transformed his analytical framework. He described Dr Chaudhry as: you were not a drop in the ocean, but you were the whole ocean in the drop.

- Mr Shahbaz Bokhari recalled that Dr Lubna Chaudhry was the unifying force. In 2001, during a poverty study conducted by SDPI, when they had to stay in rural areas for anthropological purpose, she observed the feudal system which had led to injustices, which was prevalent and how it had affected the psychological health of the peasants. She was against early age marriage; she always opposed it as it has led to illnesses in our society. He also shared an event where she advocated for the rights of the gender injustice. She voiced against the brutalities faced by the masses at large.

- Mr Ahmad Salim recalled that 2020 will be remembered as a year of grief for the Institution. Dr Lubna Chaudhry was a personality who was connected to the regional cultural roots and was outspoken about it. Mr Salim's research was applauded by her as she saw the humane factor visible in his work. He further shared that he wishes to dedicate his lifelong research work to her as a token of gratitude. She will be always missed, and her friendship was a blessing.

- Dr Abid Q. Suleri shared that being from the same ancestral town, she immediately adopted him. Before she left for the US, she gave a set of selected books which she asked him to go through. She was a very experienced mentor and had particularly chosen the books she wanted him to read. Another strength was keeping contacts. Whenever she would come to Pakistan, she would make it a point to visit SDPI. The last email that he received from her was on 1 September 2019 in which she had mentioned she needed a break and was looking for a place at SDPI for one year. He thanked all the friends who had joined the plenary session. Colleagues at the State University of New York at Binghamton (2004-2020):

- Dr Denise G Yull shared that Dr Lubna Chaudhry was affiliated with many departments because of her dynamic personality. Her quest of activism was vibrant in her personality. She fought for racial justice in the times of racial injustices at the university campus. She always supported her students. Being her student, she always found her striving for a just system. Expressing her views, she said, “Lubna will be missed as she made others feel valued by her words.”
• **Dr Joshua M Price**, a close friend and colleague of Dr Lubna Chaudhry’s stated that she, as a researcher, had influenced him even before he had met her. As a feminist she always mined the feminist theories. Her published work is acutely analytical and how she kept on integrating her impulses. She had worked extensively on the subject of women varying from different regions.

• **Dr Jakob Feinig** stated that as a teacher and a writer, he had always found Dr Lubna Chaudhry as an aspiring figure. Paying tribute, Dr Feinig said, “Every text written will always be in remembrance of hers. She was very instrumental in finding my way, my voice, my writings and also as a teacher… Each class that I teach, she is very much present and will be… She was a role model.”

• **For Dr Mohammed Rabiu Abubakari**, Dr Lubna Chaudhry was a mother figure. She was an advocate for him. Being a teacher and a mentor, she was the ray of hope. Standing for students and advocating for their rights was vibrant in her personality. Her support in every manner was a blessing and cannot be forgotten.

Mr Md Shahriar Islam, a student, shared his memories of Dr Lubna Chaudhry who was like an elder sister to him. As a mentor she was very supportive. Her method of teaching was unique. His desire was that on the eve of his graduation, Dr Lubna Chaudhry would hood him on the stage. He will carry forward her teachings and most importantly the concept of humanity which she taught and will prevail with him throughout his life. A clip from an interview conducted by PIDE was played where Dr Lubna Chaudhry had talked with reference to COVID-19 pandemic.

 Governments have to work on the fault line in healthcare system and have to fix them to ensure accessibility of it to the poor and the marginalized. As of the first world and third divide, the healthcare system needs to be addressed. The government has to play a pivotal role in restructuring rather than focusing on providing incentive programs. Concluding the Special Plenary, Dr Saba Gul Khattak said there can be no closure but there can be closing remarks. Journey will continue despite the fact we cannot rewind. She shared the announcement of the Binghampton University’s Lubna Chaudhry Memorial Scholarship in human rights which will provide financial support to coloured students who have been under-represented in the United States and have committed to social justice and activism. The scholarship will be given to students at the Masters’ level.

### CONCURRENT SESSION D-1

**A New Outlook and Emerging Needs for Education Systems Towards Addressing Impacts and Challenges of Coronavirus Era**

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<th>Chair:</th>
<th>Prof. Dr M. Irfan Khan, International Islamic University (IIU), Islamabad, Pakistan</th>
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| Speakers: | 1. Ar Aamina Shahid, COMSATS University, Islamabad, Pakistan  
2. Ms Umme Ammara, Information Technology University (ITU), Lahore, Pakistan  
3. Mr Hassan Bukhari, Information Technology University (ITU), Lahore, Pakistan |
| Discussant: | Dr Mazhar Iqbal Zafar, Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Moderator & Panel Organiser: | Dr Mahmood A. Khwaja, Senior Adviser, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Report by: | Izza Mustafa, Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), Islamabad, Pakistan |

**Prof. Dr Irfan Khan** said that the current challenge faced by educational institutions during pandemic is of high importance. He thanked SDPI for organizing the session on a burning issue. Online system has provided opportunities for people in many countries, including Pakistan. At the initial phase, the slogans of Allama Iqbal Open University such as: ‘it’s never too late’ and ‘no one left behind’ were examples of the Pakistani universities which enrolled those students who could not get formal academic qualification. Now, during this pandemic, the online system has become even more formal.

**Dr Mahmood A. Khwaja** said that the education outreach, delivery, relevance and quality at all educational levels was most severely hit during the pandemic. He raised several specific challenges and issues being faced by all...
stakeholders regarding online learning and education system. He emphasized that if the online education and learning is a long-term system then there must be solutions to issues like access to reliable technology, curriculum, textbooks, examination system review, fate of the existing old system infrastructure, and administrative and governance issues.

Ar. Aamina Shahid shared her personal experience of teaching architecture online during the pandemic. While presenting her paper titled: “Building Resilience in Professional Education during the COVID-19 Crisis,” she was of the view that resilience in education was most important for Pakistan due to fragility and disparities present within our educational system. She referred to data from a UN report mentioning disruption of education in low-income countries which stands at around 50%. She also insisted that we lack policies and procedures for a sustainable education and online learning methods. Resilience in education becomes particularly challenging for fields like engineering, medicine, architecture and arts, which require hands on practical training, skill improvement and interactive learning.

According to her research findings, 100% students and teachers interviewed considered online education and learning very challenging as compared to its traditional mode, both academically and psychologically. Some 25% students complained about the ineffectiveness of distant learning and there were “academic revision challenges”, including that of curriculum adjustments. There should be rearrangement of course sequences and recalibration of methods of delivery. Digital infrastructure should be encouraged by providing digital outreach to remote areas and promoting open-source libraries. Pedagogical support should be improved by training and assistance to IT support teams, as it has caused a lot of burden for teachers. Her research findings also revealed that according to 85% of respondents the current system was psychologically burdensome. Practical subjects took more time causing exhaustion and mental health issues. In conclusion, she recommended that to cope up with the existing challenges in a country like Pakistan, Higher Education Commission (HEC) should recognize the need for hybrid teaching mode for rotation-based use of campus facilities. Practical work should be substituted with analytical or research-based work.

The education councils should collaborate with technical service providers to improve and subsidize connectivity outreach. A culture of open-source learning through verified databases should be encouraged by the education planners and authorities.

Ms Umme Ammara presented her paper titled: “A Systems Thinking Approach to Evaluate the Impact of COVID-19 and Online Education on Student Happiness and Wellbeing”. Her study was based on “Systems Thinking” which is a non-linear way of studying a problem by multi-causal, close looped and delayed feedback mechanism which shows that every influence is both a cause and an effect. She used a qualitative tool in her study which maps out the direction of change. Discussing the causal loop diagram from her research, she referred to the curricular reforms. According to the findings of her study, curriculum reforms were a wrong quick fix and decreased teacher’s motivation towards innovation in long-term. Similarly, drug usage among students reduces their stress levels for short-term, but it has long-term psychological consequences. Stressing the need to conduct one-on-one online counselling sessions by professional counselors and psychologists, she said student-centric approaches should be promoted, rather than adopting strict curriculum reforms. Mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical training sessions should be initiated by health trainers and athletic experts.

Dr Mazhar Iqbal Zafar said that online learning has provided opportunities for those students who could not travel to big cities to get education. However, most students are non-serious, and they have not yet accepted this online system of learning and education.

Responding to a question, Prof. Irfan Khan said that assessment and evaluation of online examinations was a challenge, as cheating cases occurred during exams. He was against the continuity of this new system because of the lack of teachers’ trainings, willingness among students, punctuality, teachers’ physical inability to give emotional touch (shoulder patting/handshaking), peer learning, lack of extra-curricular productive activities, etc.

Ar. Aamina Shahid said the pandemic offered an opportunity for students in remote areas to learn. She also mentioned lack of specific expertise required for students due
to the revised curriculum. She said that probably reverting to the old in-person education and learning would be ideal.

Dr Khwaja was of the view that we need to have a comparative quality assessment of both the graduates from the two learning systems, prior to a decision whether or not to continue either of the new online or by present mode of education and learning. Regarding any revision of the teachers’ salary during COVID-19 era, Prof. Irfan Khan said that reducing salaries would not be acceptable as it was not by teachers’ choice to conduct online teaching sessions from home. Ar. Aamina Shahid was of the view to assist teachers with material and training support (not salary increase) in as much ways as possible. Dr Mazhar Iqbal said that salaries have no link with teaching modes as most of teachers are supervisors to M Phil students and come to universities on a regular basis. Ms Umme Ammara added that teachers should be given certain incentives to keep motivated in today’s environment of online education and learning.

CONCURRENT SESSION D-2

Gender-Based Violence and Pakistani Transgender Community in COVID-19 Pandemic

in knowledge partnership with Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), Rawalpindi, Pakistan

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<th>Moderator:</th>
<th>Prof. Dr Shaheena Ayub Bhatti, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan</th>
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| Speakers: | 1. Ms Nayyab Ali, United Nations Development Programme - Pakistan, Islamabad  
2. Ms Aisha Mughal, Ministry of Human Rights, Government of Pakistan  
3. Ms Huma Chughtai, Federal Judicial Academy, Government of Pakistan  
4. Ms Khadija Ali, Lawyer and Gender Activist, Pakistan |
| Panel Organisers: | Dr Shaheena Ayub Bhatti, FJWU and Ms Sana Malik, SDPI, Islamabad |
| Report by: | Mahnoor, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan |
The session revolved around the law and policies with reflection on the issues of violence and issues pertaining to transgender community.

Ms Aisha Mughal said Pakistani law gives the privilege and right to self-identification of gender to every individual, which is a great achievement. On the contrary, many Western countries are struggling at large in this regard. To give social and family acceptance is a great challenge for many. Recognition of her identity by her siblings is a blessing, but it was not easy. She said the main reason behind her acceptance in the family and relatives is her struggle and achievements as a human rights activist. People associated with her feel secure because of her gender identity. The social construct of our society is eluded by a dilemma where a boy or a girl child's acceptance is not associated with his/her achievement while a transgender child has to work and showcase his/her struggle for acceptance both in the family and the community. With the passage of time, the rate of acceptance by families for their transgender child will increase in future.

Moreover, we are seeing people who belong to the transgender community playing a pivotal role in many fields and professions. To a question on gender transformation, Aisha Mughal boldly said that her identity as transgender is her pride. While talking about gender-based violence, she said that she has recently been the victim of it when five bullets were shot at her house. And being a transgender child, it is difficult to stand against the harassment and bullying faced on the basis of one's gender identity. However, in the time of COVID-19, transgender community had to face financial constraints as majority depended on begging and earring at functions like weddings. No economic support was available for the transgender community, making them financially vulnerable. She supported the idea of capital punishment if the investigation process is transparent.

Ms Huma Chughtai said transgender community had been vulnerable during the pandemic due to their socio-economic constraints which were overlooked for various reasons. On a broader spectrum, existing policies are gender blind and when we talk about gender, we lay our focus on women specifically and the other gender especially the transgender community is neglected. Whatever progress has been made regarding the human rights particularly transgender rights, many parliamentarians are playing a crucial and an important role in reshaping the structure of policies for making it gender friendly. We never realized that there are several ways in which our society ridicules them despite the fact that we have passed “The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018”. The dilemma of our society is that anti-trans sentiments are stigmatized as reflected by the policy makers. The gender-based violence is not just limited to trans community but people with disability are also subjected to it. Another important factor which led to gender-based violence (GBV) in our society is the game of economy, especially poverty. The sad reality of our society is that no action is taken against the culprit of GBV. Lawyers are also neglecting cases where they have to defend the accused leading to weak prosecution. The need of the hour is a joint effort to fight against this societal illness by the political leadership and the mainstream media. In the times of COVID-19, the financial fallout of the transgender community was on the higher side as they had to struggle with the basic necessities of life. Health facilities for the trans community had been a challenge during the pandemic. Despite the fact that Pakistan belongs to the group of highest legislative countries, the policy formulation and its implementation has been weak resulting in gender discrimination.

Ms Khadija Ali said Pakistan is the first country which made laws on sexual harassment in 2009. There is a need to move from the attitude of celebration to the implementation of those laws by being a critique. Having more laws is not an issue but their implementation is the real challenge. Calling the adversarial system patriarchal, we need more laws and criminal amendments to infuse necessary gender perspective. The dynamics are very different in our courts than what we see in the society. Some of the gaps and lessons learnt with time are that most of the laws made are cognizable which reduce their sovereignty. Cognoscibility is one of the issues which we need to be aware of in the future. Second lesson learnt is when we are making laws for women, we need to ensure that laws are coming to force at once. Third major issue includes sexual issues in which rape is not defined in a holistic way. Also, the spectrum of punishment is not very harsh in our law. In the law for harassment, men, women, and transgender are all counted, but in the laws pertaining to rape, only men and women are counted. In our society, violence is only associated with women, which impacts our judicial system leading to discrimination of other gender. The dire need at this moment is that upon formulation of a law or a policy, the emphasis should be laid on its implementation and its sustainability with consideration of the segment of the society.
Dr Abid Suleri kicked off the session with a welcome note and an introduction of the participants. He explained that the SPRC and PASP comprise of think tanks and organizations working on social protection. He emphasized that there is a dire need to discuss the issue of social protection in a holistic manner and that the report prepared by SPRC will set direction for social protection in Pakistan.

Dr Safdar Sohail said SPRC was created in the times of COVID-19, as it was with heightened realization about the thinness of social protection as system had created major economic challenges with regard to hunger, poverty and diseases. More than 25 organizations joined hands to establish PASP and it was realized, with later discussions, that such a large and important topic with arena of actions needs a dedicated think tank to work on, for which SPRC was formed. SPRC, with its dedicated research, would try to initiate debates related to social protection to help understand the very use of term by different stakeholders at different levels in a better way. Therefore, it was decided that we must bring out an annual social protection report, which would be a flagship activity and output of SPRC and PASP. SPRC and PASP had decided to prepare a set of reports annually on the cause of social protection. The first report titled ‘The State of Old Age Well-Being Pakistan 2020 was launched on the International Day of Older Persons. The report provides the country with an indigenously developed Index of Healthy Ageing of Pakistan based on the determinants of healthy ageing in Pakistan. The other reports will focus on the issue of disability in Pakistan and health which is an important component of social protection system.

Mr Mutee Ur Rehman presented the highlights of the SPRC report comprising of four sections and each section with the status of stand-alone chapter unravelling the state of social protection in Pakistan in three major aspects. The first section explains the theoretical framework for social protection, which focuses on the social protection as concept and approaches used by international organizations and researchers. It placed an idea of transformative social protection based on provision, preventive, promotive and transformative measures.
The second section explains social protection as a system by describing social protection scenario at institutional level in Pakistan. It gives an overview of the evolution of social protection institutions within Pakistan and then moves to the status of individual domains of social protection, i.e., social assistance, social insurance, and social security. In the third section, it proposes the idea of social protection as a need and maps it in order to assess its needs at sub-national level. For this purpose, Need-based Social Protection Index has been created by SPRC. Social protection is mapped at district level and the findings show that the need is highest in Sindh and lower in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The report also provided a relationship between SPI and MPI. The fourth section deals with the optimal response to COVID-19 globally and nationally. It suggests that social protection system should focus more on social insurance and social security as compared to social assistance. It should be inclusive and transformative in nature and must have enough capacity to absorb the shock.

Dr Aliya Hashmi Khan said the SPRC report has brought together the whole spectrum and plethora of issues that are related to social protection. The issue of social protection in the time of COVID-19 is a global phenomenon and it will stay for long, resulting in economic deprivation in the society at large. The report brought together different definitions of social protection and it provoked the reader into thinking whether Pakistan is really focusing on just one particular aspect of social protection, which is social assistance. The report pushes the reader to think of addressing the fragmentation of institutional framework related to the contributory social insurance schemes in Pakistan for the formal workers. The most important takeaway from the report is of the data availability. Till now, Pakistan has no consolidated database or a dashboard, which can be accessed to get a finger on the social protection coverage, either through social assistance, social insurance or labour market policies. Ehsaas Program has done a wonderful job in harnessing digital technology resulting in a successful experience, developing the digital solutions in coordination with civil registry organization of Pakistan, NADRA, but it needs to go much beyond this limit.

In the flagship report, SPRC researchers have tried to do justice to the canvas of social protection, as they wanted to map the gap between need and coverage. To carry forward the message of universal social protection there is a dire need to address the issue of unavailability of data. The report has raised many questions across all sectors and pointed out the issues pertaining to academia, research, public sector, private sector and the allocation of public versus private pensions. The information in the report can be coined as a gold mine which can be used for designing a better social protection policy, which confirms to our constitutional obligations to cover every member of the population, from a child to a working age person to the older person.

Dr Stephen Kidd said the extensive analysis reflected in the report has raised the most important question that it is time for a major paradigm shift in social protection policy. Moreover, social protection at its core is about to provide everybody with income transfers from government, either through social insurance or through general government revenues; there is a need to look at how much actually people need social protection. The need is to raise the issue about relatively low poverty rates in reality, as over 80% of the population in Pakistan, is living on less than Rs 200 per day, which is just over $1 per day. The number reflected low levels of consumption across the population, which highlighted that access to social protection system is mandatory for a universal social protection model.

The social protection is about taxing those who are generally more better off and redistribution of the taxed money among vulnerable segments of the society so that there is an increase in incomes amongst the majority and reduction of wealth amongst the minority. Instead, the minority remain much better off than the rest of the population. It is also really important to understand that social protection when designed and delivered helps build a national social contract. The report inferred that Pakistan has bifurcated social protection system. A small proportion is getting benefitted at the top. At the bottom, we have social assistance programs for the poor. Mainly prior to COVID-19, Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) was for the poor, but those in the middle with very low incomes are highly insecure in the informal economy as they do not have access to the system.

They are living in a very precarious condition and desperately need access to social protection on a broad spectrum. The existing relief programs in Pakistan are focusing on the poor factions of the society. Because of data limitations, Pakistan has a long way to go in terms of provision of universal social protection.

Dr Jomo Kwame Sundaram stated that it is crucial for us to remember the targeting of population in case of social protection. During the COVID-19 times, lifecycle approach is the need of hour. It is also important to note that the pandemic has resulted in vulnerability of the masses on a large spectrum and requires an element of protection. In this situation, everyone is facing the failure of safe livelihood. In case of Malaysia, 80% of the population received the provident fund and the purpose was to elevate the marginalized from poverty. The social protection policy design is required and is an important segment of the state which highlights and addresses different issues pertaining to the society. In Pakistan, benefits are provided to the masses at provincial level and are disbursed in different forms. These may be extended and combined with the maternity benefits, which reflects different type of configuration. It is very important to provide vaccination after approval for different diseases. In Pakistan, people suffer from different ailments, which need to be eradicated. So, it is very important to raise this issue.

Social protection at large is to provide benefits in kind to the majority and that must be promoted. In India, women prefer benefits in kind rather than in cash because the in-kind benefits are not affected by the change in prices or inflation. He suggested that we should design our food benefits in a way that it covers all the basic micro-nutrients. In conclusion, it is important to recognize the characteristics of this pandemic and the need of the social protection in these times.
Ms Maryam Shabbir welcomed and thanked the esteemed panellists to the session. After a brief introduction, she formally invited Mr Haroon Sharif, Former Minister of State and Former Chairman, Board of Investment (BoI), Government of Pakistan (GoP) to host the session.

Mr Haroon Sharif emphasized on the role of the Ministry of Science and Technology in the present situation and said that COVID-19 posed an unprecedented challenge to humankind for developing countries that will be struggling for fiscal resources. He emphasized that we need to come up with sustainable solutions to respond to the impact of COVID-19. In addition to physical and human capital, technological advancement helps nations grow at a greater pace than countries following traditional models, for instance Singapore in 1917 started investing in knowledge-based skills and now their exports are greater than US$300 billion. So, we need to un-structure traditional economy of Pakistan, in order to catch up with the emerging Asian countries.

Mr Fawad Ahmed Chaudhry, Federal Minister for Science and Technology, said that the emergence of technology has affected all the three areas of traditional economy: productivity, labour and capital. This is the reason that it has initiated a Fourth-Generation Industrial Revolution, where ideas have taken over labour and capital, he added, “The technological revolution has reshaped economies.” Explaining further he said that the digital pace is creating inequalities which need to be addressed. Since the 1960s, our response especially to science and technology has been robust. However, unfortunately due to some misplaced priorities we did not pay much attention to civil oriented science and technology, while advanced countries kept parallel both the civil and defence engineering advancement. He further said, “Now we have been working on this synergy between civil and military engineering and also working in collaboration with NASA and German organizations in this regard”. Mr Fawad Ahmed Chaudhry, talking about the pandemic said that at the outbreak we were importing...
almost everything related to the precautions, like PPEs, sanitizers, masks and other equipment for medical staff. Realizing this need, the Ministry of Science and Technology instantly started working on it. Resultantly we were able to make not only our own sanitizers, masks and ventilators but also exported them and became major exporter to Europe, he added. This was done in collaboration with relevant industries.

Mr Sharif further asked the Minister on his take on making all these exports sustainable, to which the Minister responded that we have erected electromagnetic instruments' industries and are domestically producing ventilators with the help of the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC). He further shared that we are also preparing domestically heart stents and we are hopeful to indigenize locally made dialysis and x-ray machines.

He said we promote investment-based health sector and promote all the private partners to invest and earn. All this happened because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise for us. He said that the division of Gujranwala has much potential in the fields of electrical, medical and surgical equipment making industries. He praised the private sector that all these initiatives, especially production of health-related tools and equipment, were made possible because of them. The Minister further said that he has been a great advocate of privatization and wants that the government should limit itself only to regulation. In response to a question regarding the top priority of the country and where it has comparative advantage, he said that the Government has three top priorities: first, agricultural precisions. In this sector we want multinational companies to come forward and invest in Pakistan's agro-based economy. Second is electronics. In this regard, due to US-China trade war, China will need our semi-conductors and engineering. Third, manufacturing electric vehicles is our priority. We have been working hard in these areas. The international pressure on the combustion-based vehicles companies will help us to take them on board in going electric by 2030.

Mr Sharif further posed the question on interdepartmental coordination and consensus on these areas. In response to this, the Minister said that the Prime Minister has clustered all the relevant ministries to align their work for smooth working. Responding to a question in relation to China, he said that we must promote local partnerships, especially in manufacturing solar panels and batteries with China. He added that it will also add to our energy production. China will be in need of Pakistan in terms of skilled workers and engineers.

Mr Haroon Sharif asked Mr Fawad Chaudhry on how to change the mindset of the general people to achieve development in science and technology. The Minister responded that that we need to instil an inquisitive mindset in our people. It will help in innovation and making new discoveries in every field of life, and for all this to happen the creative minority must take initiatives. He added that for this to happen, the academicians must take the lead. In order to synchronize the academia with industries and take academia on board, he shared that we have asked 40 universities to adopt schools for "Stem Education", especially at grade nine, and to prepare them as future scientists. In this regard we are ready to collaborate with other countries and universities as well. He also said, “I will encourage the museums to take the concept of soft knowledge forward and engage educational institutions in this.”

He maintained that to make big decisions, there is a need for broad consensus among all the stakeholders, especially among the politicians. In the end, the Minister said that for any type of question or suggestion, the Ministry of Science and Technology, and personally he, is always looking forward and open for all types of queries and suggestions. He also expressed his keenness to work with the SDPI.

Mr Haroon Sharif while concluding the session said that COVID-19 has compelled many countries, including Pakistan to think progressively and move towards self-sustainability and also provide us the opportunity to look at markets where we can sell competitively. The Ministry has well identified priorities which would contribute towards knowledge-based economy and also can help in building human resource as the Minister rightly said that pace of digital economy creates inequality and for that we need to look at marginalized areas and marginalized people. There is pocket of excellence in competitive terms like Sialkot and Gujranwala, but the political focus is only on the urban side which the Ministry needs to address as well.
Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri setting the scene for the discussion shared that the discussion would revolve around evidence, research product and baselines. Developmental partners’ perspective on demand and supply driven evidence during the pandemic would also be showcased. Lack of evidence-based baseline was persistent in relation to the pandemic, as none has ever witnessed a global pandemic with devastating impacts. The session discussion started with the question followed by responses: Which type of evidences the development partners are using, their importance for partnerships and whether the evidences are helping development partners to bring about a change in the way they approach the government?

Mr Richard Ough said that most important aspect of the pandemic is that it compelled everyone to work together on the one hand. On the other hand, evidence produced by organizations like CERP, The International Growth Center and SDPI (supporting government on food security dashboard) reflected the real picture at the grass roots level. In addition, evidence commissioned by multilateral organizations like the Asian Developmental Bank, World Bank and Business Pulse Survey shed light on the business performances during the pandemic. These helped in setting a benchmark and understand the substantial impact of lockdown on businesses. However, they also show the positive trend of shifting work to digital platforms as 54% of companies were increasing their digital platform for doing businesses.

Programs initiated by the government to support the poor and the most vulnerable faction of the society during the pandemic led to a success story in the form of Ehsaas Program and Benazir Income Support Program. These programs reflected the preparedness of Pakistan at a global level. He said Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) was able to disseminate pandemic related information globally, but the way Pakistan has managed and fought the pandemic a step ahead was much appreciated.

Mr Michael Nehrbass said that the USAID has been using
Ms Wendy Gilmour said that the Canadian High Commission and its partners worked with the Ministry of Planning Development and Response Units' at the district level. Furthermore, the US needs to continue leveraging public and private sector resources to mitigate rising poverty, chronic hunger and scaling up innovations in small and medium sized enterprises in agriculture and food security. When it comes to strategic planning, the US technical experts in Washington DC interviewed the stakeholders and reviewed different data sources globally for the analysis of COVID-19, especially to establish pandemic's impact on vulnerability.

H.E. Ms Wendy Gilmour said that the Canadian Government and the donor community prioritized evidence and all its interventions are based on comprehensive data, although data collection sometimes is challenging. She said that the Canadian High Commission and its partners in Pakistan are looking specifically at the evidence that supports gender-based analysis, as Canada has a Feminist International Assistance Policy and is focused primarily on significant needs of women and girls in Pakistan.

A number of flagship programs have been retooled in parts to try and accommodate the changing circumstances due to COVID-19. Canada has provided support to the UNFPA for ‘Population Analysis Situation Report’, which worked with the Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives to prepare a comprehensive report that looks over a number of key development areas as they relate to Pakistan (environment, climate change, reproductive health, economy, gender inequality). The survey drew primarily from existing data sets like the Demographic Health Survey and Maternal Mortality Survey of 2019. Such analysis reports provide the basis to launch any intervention in those areas. Emphasis should be on the need for reliable data, which is increasingly becoming available.

At the start of pandemic, what really helped was the donor coordination that developed during this crucial time. The initiative of the World Bank to bring the donors together helped a lot as an opportunity to exchange information on the pandemic and existing programs.

In response to a question regarding lack of gender-segregated data, the High Commissioner replied that it is not just gender for which you need disaggregated data, what is also required is the socio-economic data, and evidence on minorities that needs to be desegregated to understand how policy decisions impact different communities.

Mr Umer Akhlaq Malik said that while the government was engaged in health response to COVID-19 and further shared that the UNDP wanted to look at its effects on lives and livelihood. The UNDP conducted an analysis on COVID-19 related to socio-economic impacts and response plan for Pakistan. The global network is subsequently working on National Human Development Report which will be launched in 2021. It sheds light on the economic impact of COVID-19 on lives and livelihoods. The biggest challenge faced in the times of COVID -19 was unavailability of data. For a comprehensive analysis, large data set is required which is rather difficult in Pakistan. Unfortunately, Pakistan does not have nationally disaggregated data sets covering the COVID-19 situation. The last PSLM survey was done in 2014-15, while PDHS and labour force surveys did come recently, but they were prior to COVID-19 pandemic and also had limitations in terms of reporting and at the national level.

Owing to this, it is difficult for the government to frequently produce analysis and data becomes challenging and cannot be released on a short notice. Hence this poses a challenge regarding the updated and reliable datasets. Digital platforms should also be used to gather evidence. Furthermore, in terms of dataset relating to COVID-19, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics has done a comprehensive survey on socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and it was set to come in December, but the report is still awaited. All the institutions, including the government, need data to run their programs accordingly.

The UNDP has been advocating for the evidence-based policymaking as you cannot continue spending your resources the way you did historically, he stated. Pakistan has done great work with the existing data sets and tried to re-shape its policy response during COVID-19. For example, during the lockdown, it tracked and traced COVID-19. The government also realizes the need for generating data frequently.

Mr Ahmed Khaver highlighted the work done by SDPI under its program called ‘Strengthening the Use of Evidence for Development Impact’ that included structured dialogues with policy makers and private sector to help MSMEs pivot during the pandemic. Sharing information, he said there is a lack of up-to-date evidence in the private and public sector, and female participation in the stakeholder dialogue series was a challenge. Evidence producers and evidence users are working separately and there is a lack of platform for both parties. There is a need to go beyond in order to trace that how actually information works its way towards policy making, he emphasized.
This session on “Access to Water and Sanitation in a Post-Covid Pakistan” in collaboration with WaterAid Pakistan focused on the problems related to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in the country and proposed solutions for effective management, especially after the pandemic.

The moderator, Dr Imran Saqib Khalid, commenced the session by introducing the chair and the eminent panellists. He outlined the session’s focus which was on challenges related to WASH and the possible measures to mitigate them. He stated that access to clean water is one of the major challenges in developing countries and UNICEF had reported 53,000 annual deaths due to deficiency of clean water, hence it was necessary to provide the facilities of clean water and sanitation.

Mr Niaz Ahmed, WaterAid Pakistan, elaborated the difficulties related to WASH in Pakistan and focused on integrated management to resolve the issues. He stated that four billion people in the world are deprived of hand-washing facilities. Discussing the situation of COVID-19 pandemic, he said that the development in every sector has been negatively impacted, including WASH. So, there is a need to develop suitable strategies and implement them accordingly.

Discussing the ambiguities in this sector, Mr Ahmed stated that the basic problem in Pakistan is that WASH is not considered a fundamental right, so adequate budget is not allocated for sanitation services. He mentioned that according to the statistics of 2017, 35% people in Pakistan do not have the facility of clean drinking water, while only 60% have access to toilets. He also added that only 7% of wastewater is treated in Pakistan whereas the remaining pollutes the freshwater resources.

Mr Ahmed added that there is no cohesive mechanism to deal with water related issues and the mandate is divided between different ministries that lack co-ordination. He further stated that lack of political will is also one of the main reasons of hinderance in water and sanitation measures.

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<th>Ms Kanwal Shauzab, Parliamentary Secretary, Planning Development &amp; Special Initiatives, Government of Pakistan (GoP)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Moderator:</td>
<td>Dr Imran Saqib Khalid, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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| Speakers:        | 1. Ms Zofeen Ebrahim, Environmental Journalist, Karachi, Pakistan  
2. Mr Salman Sufi, Founder, Salman Sufi Foundation, Lahore, Pakistan  
3. Mr Niaz Ahmed, Head Policy and Advocacy, WaterAid, Islamabad, Pakistan  
4. Mr Basharat Saeed, Water Resources Specialist, World Bank, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Panel Organisers:| 1. Mr Niaz Ahmed, WaterAid, Islamabad, Pakistan  
2. Dr Imran Saqib Khalid, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan  
3. Ms Zahra Khalid, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| Report by:       | Sundas Shafique, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan |

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Mr Ahmed proposed some suitable measures to provide access to water and sanitation across the country. He emphasized to work on institutional, legislative and financial sectors and provision of suitable budget at the local level. He stated that WASH is critical for building defence and resilience for healthcare, so it is necessary to have an integrated approach for enduring outcomes.

Water Resources Specialist from World Bank, Mr Basharat Saeed, focused on the WASH problems in rural areas of Punjab and respective diseases. He spotlighted key problems including open defecation and no access to clean water. He stated that over the years, toilet facilities have increased but there is no reduction in water-borne diseases like diarrhoea. He stressed that there is a need to streamline multi-sectoral efforts to resolve these issues, especially in rural communities of Pakistan.

Discussing the financial aspects, Mr Saeed urged policy makers to make smart investments for institutional sustainability of water and sanitation services. He highlighted the need to allocate more budget for water and sanitation so as to reduce the burden on healthcare. He also recommended to have a separate management system for groundwater according to hydrological parameters to reduce water pollution.

While answering a question about stunting, Mr Saeed stated that poor WASH facilities are the underlying causes of stunting in children which affect the physical and mental health of children. He added that stunting impacts the productivity of individuals impacting the overall development in future. He emphasized on linking WASH with healthcare and food security to reduce budget on economy. While answering a question about legislation, Mr Saeed stated that though there are numerous policies, they are not coherent which negatively impacts implementation. He focused on consultation among stakeholders to remove the vacuum and devise sustainable solutions.

Chair of the session, Ms Kanwal Shauzab, GoP, focused on the restorative strategies for proper sanitation in Pakistan. She initiated her discussion by highlighting the health issues in rural communities due to poor water and sanitation facilities. She delivered special remarks on the importance of SDG 6. While speaking about the current strategies, she stated that the adopted approach is reactive rather than preventive, which hinders enduring outcomes. She emphasized the need to adopt preventive measures including plantation, organic farming and safe waste disposal.

Ms Shauzab devised some post-pandemic strategies for water security and proper sanitation. She emphasized the need to increase budget on WASH, which ultimately will help attain food security, mitigate climate related issues and maintain healthcare. She also necessitated to involve the communities to raise awareness about WASH and media involvement to convey information. Talking about policy framework, she stated that policies should be formulated at the regional level according to the terrain and communities.

Environmental Journalist, Ms Zofeen Ebrahim emphasized the need to ensure access to water and sanitation facilities for everyone, especially women. She mentioned that this issue is being talked about after having been ignored in the media for a long time which augurs well for future decision making in this context.

Speaking about the state of affairs in Pakistan’s largest city, she said that Karachi has multiple jurisdictions and associated civic agencies which makes it difficult to address public policy challenges such as water and sanitation. However, she added that this is what makes writing about this issue such an interesting prospect.

While answering a question about communicating with public about personal hygiene, she stated that it might be awkward for people to discuss their personal problems which neglects their basic needs. Considering the problems of women, she recommended to involve women in policy making and implementation. Through a video message, Mr Salman Sufi, Salman Sufi Foundation, elaborated his initiative of “Saaf Bath” which aims to provide portable public toilets in Lahore and Karachi maintained by trained staff. He shared that the facility is not only for men and women but also for transgenders and disabled citizens. He stated that unfortunately the issue of clean public toilets is off the radar of the governments which has created a vacuum that can be filled by the civil society and private sector.

In this context he highlighted the need for public and private sector to provide financial incentives, to eradicate open defecation in Pakistan.
## CLOSING PLENARY:

### Sustainable Development in the Times of COVID-19

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<th>Role</th>
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<td><strong>Moderator:</strong></td>
<td>Ms Imrana Niazi, Senior Coordinator SDC Unit, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<td><strong>Welcome Remarks:</strong></td>
<td>Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairman Board of Governors (BoG), SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<td><strong>Summary of Conference Proceedings/Recommendations:</strong></td>
<td>Dr Abid Q. Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
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<td><strong>Remarks on Government’s Climate Change Agenda:</strong></td>
<td>Mr Malik Amin Aslam, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Ministry of Climate Change, Government of Pakistan (GoP)</td>
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| **Launch of SDPI’s Publications:** | • 22nd Conference’s Anthology: Sustainable Development in a Digital Society  
• Journal of Development Policy, Research & Practice vols.3 &4  
• Poisons in Our Environment by Dr Mahmood A. Khwaja |
| **Remarks on Sustainable Development in the Times of COVID-19:** | Senator Shibli Faraz, Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting, GoP |
| **Presentation of Excellence Performance Award** | |
| **Vote of Thanks:** | Dr Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| **Plenary Organisers:** | Mr Shahid Minhas and Mr Hassan Murtaza, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| **Report by:** | Urva Akmal, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan |
Ms Imrana Niazi, Senior Coordinator SDC Unit, SDPI, Islamabad, formally welcomed the esteemed panelists and the audience. Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairman Board of Governors, SDPI, Islamabad, while giving his welcome remarks at the Closing Plenary of the Twenty-third Sustainable Development Conference thanked the honourable delegates both Pakistani and foreign for their participation and making the event a success despite the fact that it was held during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He discussed the catastrophic situation caused by the Coronavirus, which had infected 60 million people throughout the world, among which 1.5 million had died [by December 2020] as the world braced itself to face the second wave despite of intensive protective measures, he elaborated.

Ambassador Kakakhel said that through this Conference, a lot of questions on sustainable development have been generated for the Government of Pakistan and other organizations. The Conference brought together experts and officials to focus on issues like food security, poverty, healthcare, unemployment, displacement and migration, social justice and equity, and detrimental climate situation. He further added that the Government and non-state actors along with international community need to cooperate in order:

- to combat the consequences of COVID-19 by ensuring the availability of enough resources in hospitals and demands of medical community;
- to mitigate the harmful impacts done by the deadly corona virus; and, to build economies in order to ensure the capability of individuals to fight the natural and man-made calamities.

- After the welcome remarks,

Dr Abid Q. Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad, was requested to share the summary of the Conference proceedings and some key policy recommendations. Dr Suleri welcomed and thanked all the participants, delegates and dignitaries at the closing plenary of Sustainable Development Conference (SDC).

He summed up the Conference agenda by stating that the SDC was meant to explore the opportunities and challenges that arose during this pandemic. He said that at this mega-event, 235 delegates from 26 countries joined in 36 sessions and 9 plenary sessions. Dr Suleri expressed gratitude to his IT team for making this Conference a success by providing a platform to hold it virtually. He added, “We have covered different aspects of economy, energy, health, education, social protection, water, climate change, gender, foreign relations, literature, food security, role of museum, tourism, media and many more”. He continued that this was not a monologue but a dialogue between policy makers and researchers who gave a lot of recommendations to improve the present situation due to COVID-19. He said, “Our preparations against this pandemic are not above average but it is not lower than average [either]”. He summed up by giving key recommendations from various sessions.

Senator Shibli Faraz, Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting, GoP, was then invited to give his special remarks on the overarching theme of the Conference. Senator Faraz stated that sustainable development is very interesting and an important subject in this time. He attributed it as “the best of times and worst of times”, a saying by Charles Dickens. He said that it is the first time in our memory that the whole world is affected, and it is a shared pain, but it has also created a lot of opportunities as well as challenges at the same time.

He expressed remorse to see suffering in the world, a suffering without any borders. Speaking about the progress of the Government, and the initiatives in place to combat COVID-19 pandemic, Senator Faraz said that Pakistan with inadequate health infrastructure had never experienced the sudden influx of people in hospitals for treatment, but the advice of Prime Minister Mr Imran Khan helped maintain focus on the protection of peoples’ lives and livelihood. With his strategy of smart lockdown, the first phase of COVID-19 went successfully with the improvement in healthcare systems and development of National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), which aims at collecting and processing the data on a scientific basis to give facts and figures related to SOPs. He said, “We are very happy to declare that we are not only producing our healthcare equipment but also exporting them.” He further elaborated that as far as livelihood was concerned, Prime Minister advised to create a mechanism to identify the sects of the society who faced trouble in earning their livelihoods. The Prime Minister’s introduction of “Ehsaas Programme” was dedicated to mitigating the pain and difficulties of people belonging to the lower strata of the society. Senator Faraz added, COVID-19 impacted our economy, industries, value chains but the Prime Minister initiated a society construction projects to give people of lower strata a reliable livelihood, which he himself monitors.

He added that moreover, the policy of smart lockdown has been appreciated by the whole world. He concluded by saying that the major challenge of this time is to make people understand the importance of SOPs, especially in the wake of political activities of opposition parties creating disruption in politics.

Mr Malik Amin Aslam, Prime Minister of Pakistan’s Advisor on Climate Change, congratulated SDPI on the success of the Conference. Talking about government’s climate change agenda, he said that this challenging time has taught us two important things such as "we need to rebalance our act with nature or else nature will react” and “we need to go on the pathway, which is nature compatible or climate compatible pathway”. For that purpose
Pakistan initiated a strategy of “green stimulus” with two clear objectives; to create green jobs for jobless people in the society and to do it in a nature positive manner. Furthermore, he said that “we chose three areas for intervention including 10 billion Tree Tsunami Project throughout Pakistan which created 85,000 green jobs for people and spurred the economy; second is Protected Area Initiative which was announced during this pandemic and 15 new national parks have been created with 15,000 job opportunities for people; and third is Clean Green Initiative, which was started by collecting data from 20 cities and expanded to 80 cities during this period”.

Mr Aslam further mentioned three important things, which were of great concern, namely, health, economic loss and food security issues. He said Pakistan is safe from all these three accounts with the blessing of Allah Almighty and country’s leadership. “Prime Minister took straight and tough decision without creating panic and chaos due to which we are able to counter the challenges of this pandemic,” he said. Mr Malik Amin Aslam while concluding his speech, mentioned success in energy and textile sectors during the challenging pandemic period.

Web development team of SDPI was awarded “Excellence Performance Award” by Dr Abid Q. Suleri to acknowledge its hard work and devotion through the years and for the smooth and flawless management in IT services during the entire pandemic period, and especially in delivering the first ever virtual SDC. Mr Adnan Hassan, Senior Manager MIS, received the shield on the behalf of the whole team.

At the Closing ceremony, three of SDPI Publications were also launched:

- 22nd Conference’s Anthology: Sustainable Development in a Digital Society
- Journal of Development Policy, Research & Practice vol.3 & 4
- Poisons in Our Environment by Dr Mahmood A. Khwaja

Before concluding the ceremony, Dr Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad, was requested to formally deliver the vote of thanks. He started by appreciating the participation from academia, embassies, [other like-minded] organizations, ministries and institutes. Dr Ahmed showed gratitude to SDPI’s Board of Governors and Chairman Ambassador Kakakhel, and the SDC unit for conducting this virtual conference. He expressed his gratitude while mentioning the high dignitaries who participated in the Conference, President of Pakistan, Dr Arif Alvi and Mr Vladimir Norov, Secretary General Shanghai Cooperation Organization, cabinet members and parliamentarians, civil servants and ministries, researchers and members from SDPI and gave their remarks and presentations at the Conference. He concluded by thanking the Executive Director Dr Abid Q. Suleri for his directions in this Conference under challenging circumstances.
Corridors of Knowledge for Peace and Development
Jointly published by SDPI and Sang-e-Meel

Corridors of Knowledge for Peace and Development launched at the Twenty-third Sustainable Development Conference is SDPI’s principal contribution to policy-relevant, timely, and reliable research and analysis on key global sustainable development issues. Offering a big picture view through the eyes of leading policy and academic stalwarts from South Asia and beyond, the book addresses issues such as human capital; social exclusion; poverty alleviation; 4IR; unfair laws and legal systems; fiscal rules and regulations; transport corridors; a changing climate; ultra-nationalism; human rights and violence against women. This collaborative effort of some 30 authors from 10 countries seeks to demystify these issues and chart a way forward, while explaining, as clearly as possible, the most pressing policy questions and the different policy positions that define them. Our hope is that those actively involved in such debates – as thought leaders, change agents, and strategists – will be able to draw on the penetrating reflections and learnings to help generate new ideas that spur action towards the common goal of achieving sustainable development and regional connectivity for the economies, ecosystems and communities of South Asia and beyond.

A free copy of the book can be downloaded from the given link:

A printed version can be bought from SDPI’s Ahmed Salim Resource Center. Please contact Mr Ali Aamer at 051-2278134 or email him at aliaamer@sdpi.org
SDPI's staff photo on the rooftop of the office after the conclusion of the Twenty-third Sustainable Development Conference
Photo Credits: Nadir Khan