**COMMITTEE: UNEP**

**COUNTRY: PAKISTAN**

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**AGENDA OF THE EVENT: Promoting the Coherent Implementation of the Environmental Dimension of Sustainable Development**

**Preface:**

In September 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the 17 SDGs as its centrepiece, was adopted. One of the more notable features of the SDGs and their 169 targets, compared with the Millennium Development Goals, is their integrated approach, placing equal emphasis on the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Studies have shown that **86 of the 169** targets seek to directly or indirectly *reduce environmental damage or emphasize the critical role of natural resources and ecosystem services in human well-being and prosperity*.

***In practice, this means that the environmental dimensions are not to be regarded as mere add-ons; rather, they are to be thoroughly interwoven with the socioeconomic dimensions of development plans.***

The SDGs represent a milestone in the global effort to recognize the central role of the environment in socioeconomic development, and vice versa. But their achievement will rest on whether countries have enough capacity to take the integrated approach forward at the national level.

If growth is to be environmentally sustainable, these selected environment-related goals and targets should be given equal consideration alongside the government’s economic, social, and climate change priorities. They need to be well integrated into national and sector policies, plans, and programs, and aligned with locally adapted priority targets and indicators.

The exceptional economic growth in Asia and the Pacific has come with significant environmental costs that undermine prospects for sustainable growth and social development. Across the region, progress towards environmental sustainability has been insufficient.  The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) put environmental sustainability at the center of sustainable development. However, meaningful action to achieve environmental goals and targets—such as SDGs 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production, 14 on Life below Water and 15 on Life on Land—requires significant strengthening of national responses to meet them. This means that policy makers need to integrate the *environmental dimensions* of the SDGs into development policies, plans, programs, budgets, and investments. Rather than leaving environment ministries or agencies to address environmental goals and targets on their own.

Ministries and agencies across the government must work together to understand the impact of their policies on them and, subsequently, to achieve them.

**Overview:**

Environmental Challenges:

Pakistan is among the countries most affected by the impacts of climate change. This is manifested in recurrent, severe natural disasters – most prominently the cataclysmic Hindu Kush earthquake in 2005, devastating floods in 2010, 2011 and 2018, prolonged droughts and intense sporadic heat waves. Pakistan is experiencing high rates of deforestation, the loss of biodiversity, land degradation, soil erosion and desertification. As uncontrolled global patterns of economic production and consumption result in increased greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), prompting rising global temperatures.

Pakistan faces serious environmental problems, most of which can be attribute to accelerating but poorly regulated economic development, even though it has slowed down recently, as well as rapid demographic growth that has put acute pressure on the country’s natural resource base, especially land and water, and significantly increased levels of local pollution. Thus, natural resource degradation and pollution, especially in urban areas, are the core environmental challenges facing the country.

The energy sector in Pakistan is the main contributor of greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 51 per cent of total emissions. It is followed by the agricultural and livestock sectors, which contribute 39 per cent. Together, these sectors contribute 90 per cent of Pakistan’s total emissions. As a result of high population growth and urbanization, the country’s natural ecosystems are being degraded, while water and air quality are deteriorating. The loss of biodiversity also points to overstretched ecosystems, posing immense challenges for environmental and socio-economic sustainability. The average rate of deforestation between 2000 and 2005 was 2.1 per cent, due to weak governance mechanisms to halt deforestation. Forest cover has remained stagnant over the past decade, while land degradation is increasing at pace.

The climate change issue, is now adding an additional and inescapable stress upon the burden of managing environmental sustainability.

Climate change directly and very strongly impinges upon future planning for sustainable development in Pakistan.

It poses a major threat to food, water and energy security in the country. In addition coastal and marine environment, dryland ecosystems, agriculture and livestock sector, forests and biodiversity and health are other areas that will be seriously affected as the climate induced melting of glaciers, cyclonic storm surges, tropical diseases epidemics, flash floods, droughts and variable monsoons turn into an inevitable future reality for Pakistan.

It, thus, comes as no surprise that the estimated cost for facing and adapting to future climate impacts ranges from U$ 6 billion to U$ 14 billion annually for Pakistan over the next 40-year horizon - a number which is likely to escalate. These figures re-enforce the inescapable linkage between climate impacts and sustaining future development in the country and the need to not only integrate these into future planning but also develop a comprehensive adaptation plan to control the costs and associated risks in the future. Along with the impacts and threats, climate change also provides an opportunity for undertaking a number of win-win mitigation and adaptation options that can lead to a low carbon development in the country and also extend other benefits such as energy and water security. Despite the challenges of cyclical and unpredictable prices, the carbon market remains potentially an effective financing mechanism that can be leveraged for this purpose through a conducive enabling environment both domestically and globally.

**Strategic Goals:**

The environment section enlists detailed strategic goals for addressing air and water pollution, land degradation and forestry issues, waste management, improving environmental governance and protection of the country’s unique biodiversity.

The overall focus is on safeguarding the environment by:

• Conserving and enhancing the natural resource base while protecting biodiversity and managing fragile ecosystems through an integrated natural resource management approach.

• Enhancing the life support system by addressing air and water pollution and reducing the ecological footprint of growth through strengthening the regulatory framework and community- based interventions.

• Preparing for climate change and its accompanying uncertainties through comprehensive adaptation and mitigation planning and concrete implementation measures.

A number of strategic goals have been enlisted in the climate change chapter with the overall aim of preparing the country to adapt to this inescapable future reality through measures such as disaster risk reduction and management, vulnerability mapping, community-based adaptation, sustainable land management and undertaking future climate resilient development especially for the infrastructure sector. Moreover, the goals provide for undertaking steps to grow along a low carbon trajectory that is in line with national development priorities such as energy conservation and renewable energy promotion while suggesting an institutional framework, driven through a “National Climate Change Fund”, to facilitate and finance this transition.

**Targets for Sustainable Development To be sustainable:**

Pakistan recognizes that the three core dimensions of development must be connected – Social, Economic and **Environmental**.

Working towards these three main dimensions of the SDGs compels us to seek for interconnectivity when devising policy frameworks. Lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Pakistan speak to the need to devise integrated policies that connect these three dimensions of development.

For instance, The National Assembly building has been ‘greened’ and is now solar powered, a symbolic move towards renewable energy sources. To achieve Pakistan’s sustainable development targets, effective coordination is required among all the stakeholders – including the Government, private sector, civil society and academia – in terms of devising and effectively implementing policies. To address financing and governance issues, the Government has engaged a group of experts to identify solutions.

Similar deliberations are on-going to devise a mechanism for effective public-private partnerships (PPPs), and engagement with development partners and civil society. Academia and think tanks have established special SDG Units and SDG Centres of Excellence to spearhead research on different goals.

**The overall target on the climate front:**

Several industrialized countries have experienced growth and development side by side, while many others where industrialization occurred more recently prioritized social indicators before moving towards higher growth. Environment issues in both types of countries were mainstreamed within the development agenda after social development and sustained economic growth had been achieved. This approach has put future generations around the globe at great risk. This is precisely why Pakistan, and a range of developing nations around the globe, are at high risk of climate change despite having relatively low carbon footprints. As such, Pakistan is working to prioritize social and environmental sustainability in its overall economic growth objectives

Pakistan’s target is to further minimize its carbon footprint and take steps to safeguard the environment, such as large-scale tree planting campaigns and extending the country’s forest cover.

Across Pakistan, multiple laws and regulations have been approved and promulgated to target core sustainable development issues. The greatest number of legislations approved and enacted by national and provincial assemblies concern all three goals on environmental sustainability and biodiversity – SDG 13 (‘Climate Action’), SDG 14 (‘Life below Sea’) and SDG 15 (‘Life on Land’) in coming years.

Concerted efforts between 2013 and 2018 have resulted in progress in the country’s environmental and climate governance structure, as a result of several developments: 48 Voluntary National Review – Pakistan 2019 • the implementation of the “Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) preparedness” project; • the rehabilitation of nine irrigated plantations sites; • the amendment of the Forest Act 1927 to allow the private sector to establish companies for accelerating afforestation.

**CONCLUSION**

Reflecting political commitment and ownership of the 2030 Agenda, Pakistan integrated the SDGs into its national development agenda in February 2016. Pakistan was first such country to do so. This reorientation in its approach was guided, inter alia, by lessons learned from the MDGs. A National SDGs Framework was launched in 2018, envisaging a national vision, plan and strategy to optimize, prioritize and localize the full potential of the 2030 Agenda in Pakistan. Taskforces and Support units in the national and provincial parliaments will facilitate legislative support for the goals’ implementation and improve coordination.

The country has *commenced actions to protect the environment and contribute to efforts to minimize the effects of climate change*.

Both adaptation and mitigation are reflected in the country’s policy and implementation approach. Pakistan’s Billion Tree planting drive across 350,000 hectares was the first Bonn Challenge pledge to hit and surpass its commitment, using national resources. This project has now been up-scaled to 10 billion Tree Tsunami – a five-year, country-wide tree planting drive to restore depleted forests and mitigate climate change. Moreover, programmes such as Clean and Green Pakistan and Recharge Pakistan have been launched. These ‘nature-based solutions for ecosystem restoration’ are leading examples of climate action among developing countries, with the added benefits of safeguarding biodiversity and generating livelihood opportunities.

The Clean and Green Pakistan Programme is engaging stakeholders in reviving flora across the country by planting 100 million indigenous tree species. The implementation of the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REED+) initiative has been converted into national monitoring system for forests.

Pakistan plans to reduce its current greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent by 2030

National data collection tools have been modified to improve data availability with a focus on the inclusivity, equity and sustainability aspects of the SDGs.

Pakistan aims to achieve the overarching goals of natural resource conservation, ecosystem and biodiversity protection, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Pakistan’s priority is to implement policies for the sustainable management of ecosystems. These will aim to increase forest cover, combat desertification, protect biodiversity and conserve natural habitats. Specifically, the target is to increase forest cover by 1 percentage point – from 5.1 to 6.1 per cent. Protected areas for the conservation of wildlife, as a percentage of total land, is planned to be increased by 2 percentage points between 2017-18 and 2023. Environmental quality control measures will be introduced to monitor air and water quality, in line with the Government’s recently devised strategy to ensure compliance with air and water quality standards.