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PRESS RELEASE

National Dialogue Series (Session II) Roundtable “Managing Hyphenated Climate and Water Challenge: A Case Study of Pakistan”

17 July 2019



- Water is a commodity and must be treated as such.
- Pakistan cannot continue business as usual water management. It is vital to reform water governance laws, policies, and institutions and infrastructure investments. The National Water Policy 2018 needs to be implemented in letter and spirit.
- The state needs to end its monopoly on water; invest immediately & heavily in storage capacity and water enforcement.
- Pakistan needs to be prepared for India’s attempts of using water as a coercive strategic tool.
- The state and citizenry need to become water wise.

These were the recommendations put forward by the speakers at the **National Dialogue Series Roundtable** on “*Managing Hyphenated Climate and Water Challenge: A Case Study of Pakistan*” organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute here in Islamabad, today.

In his Keynote Address, the Chief Guest **Engr. Shams-ul-Mulk, former chairman of Pakistan's Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA)**, said that a conference on water

issues is an important need of the country in order to take concrete steps to conserve water for next generations of the country. Sharing the history behind the Indus Waters Treaty and role of WAPDA in the development of dams like Tarbela and Mangala, he stressed that “when it comes to water issues, leadership, vision and capacity are very important.” He said that “water security is an important and



growing challenge for Pakistan, and one that extends far beyond the traditional water sector. It influences diverse aspects of economic and social development, as well as national and regional security.” He warned that Pakistan’s economic growth will not increase if dams are not constructed. Mr Mulk was of the view that those who oppose the construction of large dams are not aware of the looming water crisis in the country and don’t want Pakistan to progress. “Enemies of Pakistan have disabled and crippled our efforts so much that we have not been able to build any new dams,” he said. Engr. Mulk recommended that Kabul River should become a “river of friendship” and joint cooperation initiative between the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Welcoming the speakers, environmental activists, media and students, **President of IPRI Vice Admiral (Retd.) Khan Hasham bin Saddique** highlighted that objectives of The National Dialogue Series is to debate and proffer policy recommendations on important national issues. He said that climate change and water security are urgent contemporary challenges whose socio-economic and food security impact on Pakistan would be grave. He said that numerous studies have



concluded that climate change is likely to lead to floods, droughts, rising sea levels, heat waves, melting of glaciers etc. Dilating upon water security, he said that Pakistan is blessed with adequate surface water and the 4th largest grand water aquifer. However, population growth, urbanization, and poor water management have caused water scarcity with only 1100 cubic metres per person water available in Pakistan. Urgent steps are needed to conserve, build new storages, recycle and adapt to new realities. He feared that “transboundary water disputes are ticking time bombs which need to be resolved diplomatically.” He emphasised that policies need better implementation to address the issue.

Conducting an appraisal of Pakistan’s water resources, ***Mr Lixin Gu, Sustainable Development Program Leader from the World***

Bank Pakistan, outlined that the availability of water is crucial for Pakistan’s agriculture growth. He informed that the sector consumes around 95 percent of the country’s water resources. At the same time, per capita availability of usable water is decreasing, primarily because of population growth, pollution and inefficient use of water resources. Mr Gu pointed out that “Pakistan is well endowed with water - only 16 countries have more water - but because Pakistan is the world’s sixth most populous country, water availability per person is



comparatively low. He pointed out that “water use is heavily dominated by agriculture, which contributes around one-fifth of national GDP, but less than half of this is from irrigated cropping. Irrigation contributes around USD 22 billion to annual GDP. Crops like wheat, rice, sugarcane, and cotton that represent nearly 80 percent of all water use generate less than 5 percent of GDP -



around USD 14 billion per year.” Mr Gu stressed that addressing climate change risks calls for a more resilient agriculture sector since increasing water use efficiency will contribute to greater resilience.

Discussing Pakistan’s transboundary water relations with India and Afghanistan, ***Dr Pervaiz Amir, a regional expert for the Stockholm-based Global Water Partnership*** pointed to internal transboundary issues as well as India’s use of water

as a coercive tool to increase Pakistan's water woes. He warned that unlike the recent showdown between the two countries, India's nefarious strategies under Modi's administration will be to target Pakistan water resources. He said threats from the Indian leadership — especially Narendra Modi and his cabinet — should not be taken lightly and negative tactics from the Indian side need to be countered. "Pakistan needs to sort out its internal strife and inter-provincial conflicts over water and ensure internal dispute resolution first before going to the international community to rally support for its historical rights over water flows."

Mr Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, CEO, Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) Pakistan called for improvement in understanding of mountain water sources and the impact



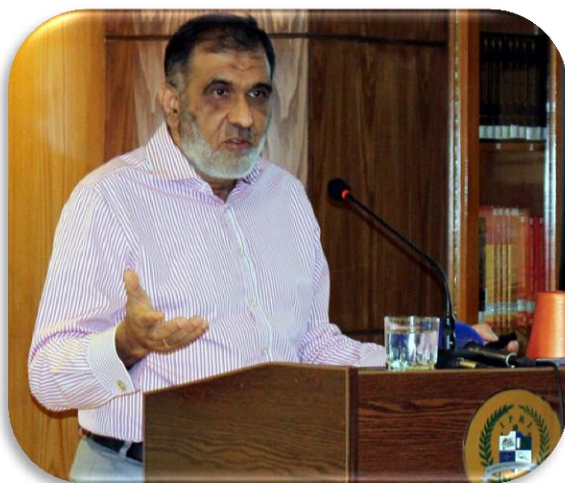
that this water on food production. "We need better and more efficient targeting measures and take into account the impact of climate change upon downstream flow of mountain water. Despite a multitude of constraints impacting the flow of mountain water onto downstream areas, it is imperative to develop avenues for further collaboration, research and dialogue in order to tackle constraints", he shared. Mr Sheikh highlighted that increased insight about the link between sources of water demand and sources of supply is important for developing appropriate adaptation measures. "For this

reason, a water resources model will help to understand risks. As population continues to increase and demand for water rises, prioritizing further research and dialogue on mountain water is imperative. By 2030, Pakistan stands to lose wheat yields by 20 percent - a staggering amount for a country whose backbone is formed by wheat. Researchers, policy makers and all relevant stakeholders need to be cognizant of the impact of climate change upon availability and temporal variances in water flow", he concluded.

Dr Imran Saqib Khalid, Research Fellow at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute offered a sectoral analysis based on a field research conducted in Dera Ghazi Khan and Jhang to look at political-economy considerations in determining water governance responses to flood risks; equity and justice concerns in disaster risk management and policymaking. He highlighted that Pakistan's current flood crisis stems from emphasis on "control" rather than "management" since flood control measures have been ad hoc and stand-alone, reactive rather than proactive and largely focused on structural measures. He lamented that solutions have been developed in a monodisciplinary manner and lessons from past failures have rarely been learned. Sharing the study's results, Dr Khalid said that over a dozen entities are dealing with floods in Pakistan across federal, provincial and district boundaries which makes coordination difficult; and floods are blamed on lack of political leadership. He shared that natural water channels are blocked by influential people through unplanned development, hence, exacerbating losses during floods, with women and children bearing the brunt of the impact of extreme events. He recommended redefining standards, viz embankments; harnessing green/ natural infrastructure to manage existing and future flood risks; ensuring on the ground application of proper land use planning. "Pakistan needs to develop a gender sensitive early warning system, and formulate a comprehensive insurance policy mechanism to counter the impacts of extreme flood events," he recommended.



In his presentation "Water Scarce to Water Secure Pakistan: Recommendations for Action",



Mr. Syed Abu Ahmad Akif, Member Prime Minister Inspection Commission, Former Cabinet Secretary said that the great difference between developing countries that have progressed over the last 30 years and those that have stagnated is not the ability to formulate policies, but the ability to translate policies into actions. "In Pakistan, policies and recommendations abound but what matters is identifying implementable improvements to deal

with water and climate change issues.” He called for stronger regulations on the water sector; ending sugar subsidy; and creating a Water Commodities Market in line with international best practices. “Pakistan needs to stop growing thirsty crops; create a water economy; and make the sector financially sustainable by measuring and pricing water realistically.”



In his address, *former Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, chair of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute’s Board of Governors*, lamented the deteriorating quality of water flowing into Pakistan, the alarming reduction in quantity of water, and other important water management issues. He was hopeful that Pakistan’s re-engagement with the climate change negotiations, after several years of being sidelined due to absence of skilled negotiators, is an important development. He

also remarked that countries with high population growth rates, Bangladesh, Sub-saharan Africa, have done something, but nobody in Pakistan is doing anything to slow down the rate of population growth which will exacerbate both economic and environmental challenges.

The National Dialogue Series has been initiated by IPRI to facilitate cooperative solutions to major socioeconomic issues and help in the formulation of broad contours of a national narrative.

