



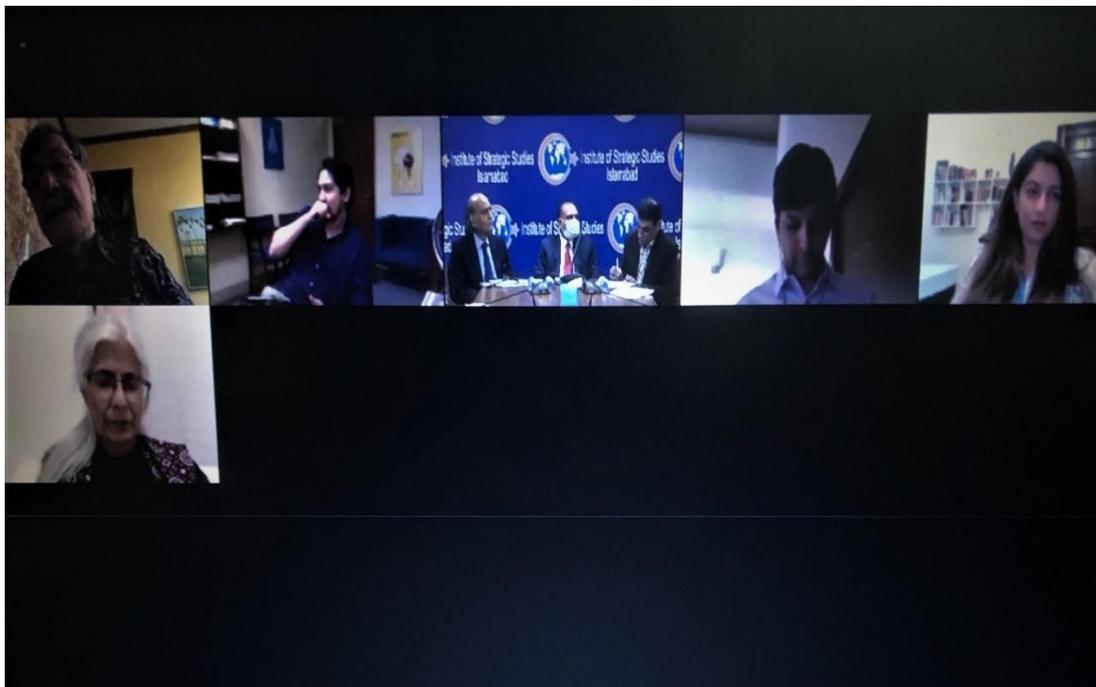
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Report – Webinar

“Pakistan and the UN: A Partnership for Environmental Sustainability”

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The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP), Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a Webinar titled “Pakistan and the UN: A Partnership for Environmental Sustainability,” on October 15, 2020. The lead speaker at the Webinar was Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairman BoG, SDPI. Other panellist at the webinar included: Ms. Afia Salam, Freelance Journalist; Dr. Sanval Nasim, Assistant Professor of Economics, LUMS; Mr. Basharat Saeed, Water Resources Specialist at World Bank Group and Ms. Komal Shakeel, Director at Profectus Advisory Services. The Webinar was moderated by Mr. Najam Rafique, Director CSP/Research at ISSI.

Mr. Najam Rafique, Director CSP/Research, in his introductory comments stated that Pakistan is one of the most vulnerable countries in terms of being impacted by Climate Change (CC). The Global Climate Risk Index 2020 has placed Pakistan on the 5th spot of countries most impacted by CC. In this regard, Pakistan is taking the right steps in line with the UN efforts for mitigation of climate related issues. The transition to green economy is the aim of the incumbent government which is undertaking projects in this regard. Among the major issues highlighted by the PM Imran Khan at the 75th UNGA session was the need for global responses regarding CC and the need for the global community to be more responsive. He said that ISSI has organized this webinar to analyse and discuss steps taken by Pakistan in achieving environmental sustainability in lieu with UN SDGs.

In his introductory remarks, Director General ISSI, **Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry**, thanked all the speakers for their participation. He pointed out that this webinar is in a series of programs that the Institute has decided to carry out pursuant to the themes that PM Imran Khan raised at his formal speech in the UNGA. Climate and mitigating the effects of Climate Change (CC) is an extremely important subject. Since 1992 when the first UN mega conference was held in Brazil, the world has spent considerable time and energy to understand how to best save our environment. All this effort culminated in 2015 in the form of the Paris Accord. Regrettably, the Trump administration decided to pull out of that which was a setback. However, the international community remains determined to continue its decades long work in this domain. For Pakistan, it makes much more sense than many other countries because we are vulnerable country to CC and have witnessed, in recent years, flash floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters which are the consequence of CC phenomenon. Hence, the emphasis that the PM has laid down on

environment and called for global action as a universal responsibility. In Pakistan, the government has taken measures like planting billion of trees to preserve the environment. Through this webinar ISSI aims to learn more about the partnership between the UN and Pakistan to achieve environmental sustainability.

Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, in his remarks said that when the UN was established in 1945, environmental protection was not envisaged as one of its core objectives. The charter of the UN does not contain any mention of environment, environment protection and environmental sustainability. Today, after 75 years, all the agencies, institutions and funds of the UN, and all multilateral organizations like IMF and World Bank are committed to protection of environment in the projects they are involved with. In today's world, the financial institutions are spending a lot for combating CC, which will exacerbate all the environmental problems and create socio-economic and other challenges for the international community.

The UN involvement in environmental affairs was triggered by the first UN Conference on environment held in Stockholm, which was attended by majority of countries in the world. It came up with declaration principles emphasizing the importance of environmental protection and a detailed plan of action on how the international community could work together to deal with environmental issues, particularly the two most important objectives of environmental protection:

1. To prevent life threatening pollution of the air, water, land.
2. Discourage excessive use of world natural resources to prevent destruction of ecosystems.

The UN deals with environmental sustainability by doing the following things:

1. It commissions scientifically credible assessments of various aspects of the global environment and major environmental issues.
2. On the basis of these commissioned reports which are examined by countries and delegates in UNGA, and then it is decided whether there is a need for international agreement on the issue which has been assessed extensively. If it is agreed that there is a

need for an agreement the UN convenes and facilitates international negotiations in which all countries of the world participate, which mostly take place during Sustainable Development Summits.

3. Another major activity of the UN is to promote international cooperation through establishing, inspiring and providing leadership to the various organizations of the UN the UNEP, which was established in 1973 with its headquarters in Nairobi.
4. The UN helps to enforce the various international agreements related to environmental protection like the Paris Agreement signed in December 2015.

Ambassador Kakakhel also talked about how Pakistan has reacted to environmental protection. He said Pakistan has always participated in all major conferences and tried to contribute successfully. Pakistan has also established a Ministry of Environment in 1975. In 1992, as a chair of G-77, Pakistan played a great role in negotiating the outcome of the Rio Summit. Pakistan has also ratified all major international agreements on environment and formulated strategies and plan of action to implement these agreements.

In the field of environment, Pakistan has adopted important national laws such as National Environmental Protection Law in 1997, which created the Environmental Protection Agency and the Provincial Protection Departments. In 2002, Global Change Impact Study Centre was established by the government in order to comprehensively monitor CC trends and how it will impact vital economic sectors. In 2012, the government adopted a CC policy framework and in 2017, the National CC bill was adopted which creates a National CC council headed by the head of government and creates an executive authority and also a fund to finance CC projects. Also, a National Water Resources Policy was adopted in 2018. The present government has taken several initiatives for environmental protection through its various projects and schemes and tried to incorporate more renewable sources of energy in the power mix to almost 30% by 2030.

Ambassador Kakakhel said that in Pakistan there are national policies on CC, but these policies are not costed, so the budgets are prepared in isolation from the agreements that the country has developed, and the objectives of the agreements degenerate into aspirations that cannot be fulfilled. The government should examine all the agreements that it has formulated with experts

and create a prioritized list of activities, fully costed, so that it should know what is envisaged and where the funds for it will come from. Coordination among the agencies of the Federal and Provincial governments needs to improve and the National CC Act needs to be operationalized.

Ms. Afia Salam said that Pakistan has CC policies, but implementation is lacking. There is a lack of coordination among the different departments of the government and the scientific institutes which leads to lack of information. All the departments need to work together to come up with solutions to deal with CC problems. The conversation about environmental issues has unfortunately not moved out of the niche circles. There needs to be a horizontal and vertical spread of the conversation about CC because it is impacting people right down on the ground. These people are aware of the impact, but they do not know what is being done about these issues. Sometimes the environment issues are seen with a lens of disaster, so the disaster management becomes the most important vehicle of response.

In Pakistan, we see seasonal responses, like when the air quality worsens it becomes the focal issue in winters. Water is an issue that needs constant discussion but that is also not a conversation that is happening on a holistic level. Integrated management of water resources is overlooked and focus is more on water scarcity and infrastructure and other sectors which have a direct bearing on the matter are ignored like the agriculture sector, rapid urbanization, economic migration, displacement of large number of communities due to mismanagement of water resources triggering climate migration. There are so many factors and it looks like a huge jigsaw puzzle which is unfortunate because there are departments which are responsible which are not functioning efficiently to alleviate the problems.

Ms. Salam said that Pakistan is also a signatory to SDGs, but it failed miserably to implement its predecessor - the MDGs - as proper systems were not put in place and SDGs implementation is also a source of worry because of the same issues. Pakistan needs to be weary of its claims of meeting some targets like the SDG on CC ahead of time, but at the same time also be appreciative of the work being done in this connection. The Green Stimulus in response to the Covid-19 through the afforestation program is a positive step, and this shows that the potential to be able to meet and address issues is there. The mechanism of coordination is still the biggest impediment among various departments which need to sit together and communicate to set out

the plan of action. Finally, the continued use of fossil fuels and old technology in the energy mix needs to be looked at and phased out quicker than earlier envisaged as the country does not have adequate resources to deal with the adverse environment fallout from their use. The use of resources and funds need to be made more transparent to lessen the impact of CC.

Dr. Sanval Nasim, said that there is a distinction between CC and environmental issues. The tools required to tackle each problem are probably similar, but they are distinctly different problems. CC is a Greenhouse gas related issue and environmental issues are localized in their impact at a given point in time. Air quality problem in Lahore is an environmental issue, whereas Greenhouse emission from various countries is a global issue leading to CC problem.

Talking about Lahore, he said that there are two main issues facing the city, air quality and ground water management. On air quality, there is a high concentration of a certain particles in the air for a while, and the problem usually starts in the winter season. In the last 4-5 years, a lot has been learnt about what are the sources of the particulate matter. There is a lot of literature and policies from across the world on how to deal with the issue, but the government has not been able to implement these policies. The top sources of pollution in Lahore are vehicular emissions predominantly old vehicles. Countering this issue should be easy as there are policy tools available to phase out these old vehicles like the program in US called 'cash for clunkers' where subsidies and incentives are given to people with old vehicles to phase them out and reduce the impact on air quality.

Another important contributor is crop burning which the farmers carry out around Lahore while burning rice stubble. The response of the government has been to ban crop burning at certain points of the year, but it does not have the capacity to enforce this policy. Since the passing of the 18th Amendment, environmental protection has become a provincial issue, and each province has to mandate its own air quality standards for air and water, and then has to use its own resources to enforce those standards. The funds allocated to environmental protection are very meagre leading to under staffing of provincial EPAs to carry out proper surveillance. Therefore, different departments need to coordinate to deal with the problem. Another way is for the government to come up with information interventions as bans do not seem to work.

Dr. Nasim, also said that water management is also linked to the air quality issue, as air is a common pool resource and water is also treated as such in Pakistan. Except for surface water where user rights are defined per acre of land, when it comes to groundwater if the resources are there to invest in a tubewell then water belongs to you. The law is yet to define who owns the underground water and because of that, it's being abused. Therefore, there is a need to create market for it so that the entity that is using the water has to pay for it if they are generating some kind of value from it. Poor agriculture subsidies on water guzzling crops like sugar cane is another impediment as the farmers are using underground water for almost free.

Finally, he said that the responsibility on who owns the resource needs to be defined in government policies, otherwise you will end up in courts for the rest of your life. The use rights need to be defined, further, the people need to be given access to markets to sell their water as a commodity. Therefore, the local governments need to go back to the drawing board and come up with suitable policies and involve various stakeholders like academics and scientists and stakeholders.

Mr. Basharat Saeed said that Pakistan has a very impressive National Conservation Plan which was formulated in 1992, and became a blueprint for many other countries to follow but was not formally implemented in Pakistan. There is a significant overlap between environment and water resources and mismanagement of Indus Delta is a great snapshot of it. If you want to gauge the health of river system, the point of drainage is of utmost important. There is a need for integrated water resource management because it values water as a valuable resource as it is in nature, and this needs to be made a focal point. Pakistan water policies like PIPA are focused on discharge into water bodies rather than volume of that water body.

Another aspect of water quality that does not get noticed is very localised issues due to low investment in sanitation and sewage treatment, which is a big issue in rural spaces. The main driver of issues faced now are successes we had in MDGs on sanitation, which included an end to open defecation leading to installation of pit latrines without pipe drainage. Overtime, this created a problem of mass faecal waste right below households and concentrated it in communities, and because there was no treatment, eventually the contaminants started seeping into underground water which was being used for drinking. This has led to a whole generation of

children growing up with intestinal problems leading to malnourishment and stunting. But due to lack of coordination between various departments on resolving the issue from the onset which was well intentioned has become a sad story.

Mr. Saeed said that the other big issue when it comes to environmental sustainability has to do with irrigation and drainage. The drainage part of the projects was ignored in major irrigation projects leading to manifestation of water logging and salinity across the country. The natural home for the water is the basin and the planning and coordination needs to start from there. IRSA is the custodian of the Indus Basin and it was created with the vision that it will be a coordinating forum at the national level so that meaningful basin level could be done. But it is very restrictive in its role now.

Mr. Saeed gave a few recommendations in the end which were:

1. Understanding that water resource management is a science and to drive the right implications from it for policy making, it must be looked as such.
2. GoP needs to look at irrigation and drainage and give it more focus because it is where bulk of Pakistan's freshwater goes and to modernize it, coupled with increasing water usage agriculture productivity, crop per drop.
3. There is need to invest in waste management and sanitation because it is a public health issue as it is affecting the nourishment levels of adolescents.

Mr. Saeed added that to be environmentally sustainable, start from the delta not from the mountains.

Ms. Komal Shakeel started by saying that issue of financing and proper allocation of budget is an issue, but it is a global issue as there is USD 2.5 trillion shortfall in financing the SDGs. There is a financing gap which Pakistan needs to get more traction for globally to fulfil SDGs, especially related to resource management and those contributing to CC targets. There is a need for effective institutional capacity and thinking which plague policy making in the country. Due to lack of institutional capacity, the GoP is not able to formulate right policies so there is a need

to be innovative. There is a need to look at financial products which alleviate financial bottlenecks.

Ms. Shakeel added that the existence of social impact and development impact bonds that the World Bank is working on can be a way to fill financial gaps. Impact financing and outcome-based contracts is a good idea to enable bringing in resources from other sectors within the economy, like private sector mobilization, both domestically and internationally, given that there is a traction to the idea that there is financing gap in SDGs and there will be receptivity in international donors. This can be used by GoP as India is already using such impact bonds to cover its SDG gaps. CC is something which cannot be ignored and for long term sustainability there is a need to put things right now and environmental impact is integrated in all planning activities of the government in all sectors. With innovative financing like the impact bonds, GoP can divert its resources to institutional strengthening and better coordination which can trickle down to achieve climate goals.

In the general discussion which was moderated by Mr. Rafique, the discussants talked about the persistent problem of smog that exists in Punjab.

Dr. Nasim said that rapid urbanization is one of the main reasons without proper planning which played a major part as the existing cities are not smart cities. This leads to pollution and resource degradation and there is one size fit all solution as it has many dimensions and there is lack of capacity on the government front. China is a good example for Pakistan in how to effectively bring down pollution levels through proper planning and adopting environmentally friendly policies. New technologies and new economic policies need to be adopted simultaneously by GoP.

Answering a question about Pakistan energy mix, Ambassador Kakakhel said so far Pakistan has not made determined efforts to introduce renewable sources of energy like solar, into the system. But hopefully, the implementation of the new renewable energy policy will help matters. There is a lot of untapped potential in the renewable energy sources in Pakistan, but there is lack of coordination between production and transmission of energy and there should be incentives given to the private sector to invest in it along with incentives given to the public to use it.

Mr. Saeed while addressing a question about efficient use of water resources in Pakistan said that not all water needs to be captured for it to have intrinsic value and not all water that flows into the sea is wasted. A delta deprived of water for months and years, parts of it will never recover, so it's all about managing the flows of water in the Indus Basin and irrigational inefficiencies must be removed. Pakistan does have enough water endowment to be able to survive the rising challenges of water availability, it only needs better management.

Ms. Shakeel talked about outcome base contracts like development impact bonds which allows private sector to pour in resources and expertise to help fund development projects to improve the environment where the government does not have sufficient funds. This helps in removing financial bottlenecks in the market by having an outcome funders and investors from the private sector and spreads the risks of the project as it is based on outcomes and helps to make it successful. This is an innovative financial structure which can be used by the government to mobilize funding from the private sector.

Chairman BOG ISSI, **Ambassador Khalid Mahmood** concluded the Webinar by saying that topic of discussion on hand is off seminal importance for the planet and the organisms living on it. Record heat waves, drought, floods and other erratic environmental events impact the daily life and CC is no longer a threat multiplier, but it has become direct cause of security threats. It is leading to social instability leading to internal and trans-regional displacements and climate refugees' number is rising. The awareness about this challenge has been late in coming to Pakistan, but now there is at least growing awareness about the severity of the challenge caused by CC. Steps have been taken at mitigation and adaption level along with signing of international conventions to face this challenge like the Paris Accord of 2015.

Ambassador Mahmood added that the 18th Amendment has compounded the problem as environment is now a provincial subject and each province is equipped differently to deal with this issue. The issue of common and differentiated responsibility is an important subject as developing countries have made less impact on CC, but still must pay a hefty price to rectify the problem created by the developed countries. Therefore, the developed countries need to aid the developing countries to address CC issues. Pakistan alone needs USD 40 billion for reduction of greenhouse gases by 20% by 2030. Another point is that climate does not know any geographical

boundaries, meaning that there is a need for cooperation and collaboration at the national and regional level and SAARC can play an important role, but it has been made redundant. The developed world needs to check overconsumption, while the developing countries need to check the population explosion , and because of these things the problems inherent in CC are further compounded. He concluded by saying that CC is a defining issue and needs defining action now because the damage inflicted on nature will be inflicted back on the human race.

PICTURES OF THE EVENT

