

## PAKISTAN'S RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES AT MIDDLE EAST GREEN INITIATIVE SUMMIT

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*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



Prime Minister Imran Khan attended the Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) Summit, where he shared his perspectives on the challenges faced by the developing countries due to climate change. The Prime Minister highlighted Pakistan's experience of launching nature-based solutions to address the environmental challenges.<sup>1</sup> The Middle East Green Initiative Summit brought together global and regional leaders to motivate consensus to deliver against shared environmental commitments. Besides Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul-Aziz, the MGI Summit was addressed by leaders and representatives of various countries including Kuwait, Algeria, the United Kingdom, Greece, Jordan, Russia, Morocco, Qatar, Iraq and Yemen.<sup>2</sup>

PM Khan, while addressing the MGI summit said that world should take the challenge of climate change more seriously, and he defined measures taken by Pakistan on this front and warned of serious consequences if immediate measures were not taken to address the problem. He opined that just 10 per cent of the world's countries were responsible for emissions causing environmental damage. He also mentioned that Pakistan is among the 10 countries most vulnerable to climate change and over the past 10 years, the country has faced 152 extreme weather events which has

1 "Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (23-25 October 2021)," PMO, [https://pmo.gov.pk/press\\_release\\_details.php?pr\\_id=3811](https://pmo.gov.pk/press_release_details.php?pr_id=3811)

2 Middle East Green Initiative Summit", Saudi Green Initiative, October 25, 2021, <https://www.saudigreeninitiative.org/events/middle-east-green-initiative-summit/>

triggered an economic loss of over \$3.8 billion. Pakistan has already shelved 2,400 megawatts of coal projects and replaced them with 3,700 megawatts of hydroelectricity. And also focused on nature-based initiatives, notably the 10 Billion Tree Tsunami project with 2.5bn trees of the 10bn target already planted.<sup>3</sup> In his speech PM Khan further added that the government plans to plant 1 million more mangroves by 2023, and green parks in the country have been expanded by 50pc during the pandemic. The incumbent government has provided green jobs — jobs that are related to improving the environment and 85,000 jobs have been created in this area and the number is expected to rise to 200,000 by next year. The PM said that the glaciers were melting at a rapid pace due to climate change and as a result, Pakistan and several other countries were at risk of facing water scarcity.<sup>4</sup>

On the side-lines PM had a meeting with the US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry and underlined the need to reinforce national as well as global emphasis against the existential threat of climate change. The PM shared his perspective with the special envoy on challenges faced by Pakistan and other developing countries due to climate change, while highlighting Pakistan's experience of launching nature-based solutions to address the environmental challenges, including the Plant for Pakistan campaign. PM Khan also expressed his satisfaction at the recently held inaugural meeting of the US-Pakistan Climate and Environment Working Group, which explored potential areas of bilateral Pak-US cooperation on climate. Both leaders also agreed that Pakistan and the US shared a longstanding relationship, which should be further reinforced in areas of mutual convergence, including climate and environment. Senator Kerry also acknowledged various initiatives undertaken by Pakistan to fight climate change. PM Khan further encouraged Senator Kerry to further explore the possibility of enhanced bilateral engagement through the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) to support investment in climate mitigation, resilience, and adaptation in Pakistan and the developing world.<sup>5</sup>

Pakistan has turned its green ambitions into reality by achieving the UN Climate Action Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-13) a decade ahead of the 2030 deadline. This is an outstanding achievement for Pakistan to attain the crucial Goal 13 - Climate Action well before the 2030 deadline. Pakistan has made continuous efforts and taken initiatives of large-scale afforestation, biodiversity conservation, and investment in clean energy, electric vehicles and green jobs to combat climate change impacts. Some of the key green projects undertaken by the government include 10

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<sup>3</sup> "At Green Initiative Summit, PM Imran urges world to take climate change more seriously," Dawn, October 25, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1653983/at-green-initiative-summit-pm-imran-urges-world-to-take-climate-change-more-seriously>

<sup>4</sup> "Pakistan requires \$6 to 14 billion in climate adaptation costs: PM," Business Recorder, October 25, <https://www.brecorder.com/news/40128922>

<sup>5</sup> "In meeting with John Kerry, PM Imran Khan stresses release of Afghan economic resources," The News, October 25, 2021, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/903074-in-meeting-with-john-kerry>

Billion Tree Tsunami Program, Clean Green Pakistan Initiative, Clean Green Pakistan Index, Protected Areas Initiative (15 new national parks), Ecosystem Restoration Fund for facilitating green growth and policies consistent with the objectives of Pakistan's Nationally Determined Contribution and attaining Land Degradation Neutrality. These initiatives have been taken to prevent and to be better prepared for the threat of climate change experienced by the country such as floods, heat waves, droughts and melting glaciers.<sup>6</sup>

Pakistan's Green Stimulus package announced in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to protect nature while offering green jobs was highly appreciated by global experts at the Summit. But it is important to recognise that SDG 13 measures a country's commitment to climate action, in terms of what it sets out in formal governance policies, and not the effect of these policies in terms of measurable outcomes. While the mainstreaming of climate-compatible development in government policy documents is an important milestone, it is only a means to an end, not the end in itself.

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<sup>6</sup> "Pakistan achieves UN climate action goal 10 years ahead of deadline," Gulf News, July 13, 2020, <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/pakistan-achieves-un-climate-action-goal-10-years-ahead-of-deadline-1.72574154>