

January 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 4TH TO JANUARY 10TH 2016

COMPLYING WITH UN CONVENTIONS: GSP PLUS STATUS TO REMAIN VALID UNTIL 2023

The Express Tribune, January 5th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: The preferential trade status granted by the European Union (EU) to Pakistan under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) Plus programme will remain in place until 2023.

The scheme has been announced for the period January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2023 subject to satisfactory implementation of 27 United Nations conventions by Pakistan.

According to officials in the Ministry of Commerce, under the GSP Plus framework, the EU and Pakistan have got engaged in a very open and constructive programme to share information about sustainable development issues such as labour rights, environmental protection and good governance.

The EU has cooperated with Pakistani authorities and progress has been made on implementation of the international conventions.

The officials point out that the government has gradually put in place institutions designed to respect, protect and promote human rights such as the GSP Plus Treaty Implementation Cell, headed by the special assistant to prime minister on law and justice, at the federal and provincial levels.

In addition to this, the National Commission for Human Rights has also been established as well as human rights cells at high courts throughout the country.

A national framework on human rights is also at an advanced stage of finalisation. Furthermore, in October and November last year, Pakistan submitted its country reports to the relevant UN bodies dealing with the human rights conventions.

According to the officials, the European Commission is preparing a technical report for the European Parliament and EU member states (council) to present the trade data linked with the GSP Plus scheme as well as developments in the area of human rights and labour laws. The report will be completed by the end of January this year.

Pakistan is confident that the report will highlight its comprehensive partnership with the EU on these issues.

The officials point out that the commerce ministry will advise exporters to continue exporting high-quality products to the EU without indulging in any kind of speculation about the continuity of GSP Plus in coming years.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1021910/complying-with-un-conventions-gsp-plus-status-to-remain-valid-until-2023/>

SUSTAINABLE GOALS

Arif ASzad, Dawn, January 10th, 2016

IN September, the UN General Assembly agreed on the Sustainable Development Goals. SDGs are a set of universal goals agreed on after three years of negotiations. They are an expansion of the Millennium Development Goals agreed on at the beginning of the new century; the MDGs expired last month.

The eight MDGs were chiefly concerned with reducing hunger and poverty, achieving universal education, promoting gender equality, reducing child and maternal mortality, combating HIV and malaria, ensuring environmental sustainability and promoting global partnerships.

Over a period of 15 years, some countries worked hard to meet these globally agreed goals; others made modest progress lagging far behind on MDG-directed development goals. In South Asia, Bangladesh, India and Nepal did well on some indicators while Pakistan lagged lamentably behind on almost all of them. Now that the MDGs are out of the way, a post-mortem is being conducted on what was good and not so good about them.

The SDGs have more input from civil society.

Broadly, the MDGs provided a conceptual framework and pointed some pathways out of chronic underdevelopment which has been the bane of developing countries. Although the MDGs were applicable to all countries, they came to be associated mostly with the developing countries that suffered from a different level of underdevelopment.

Developed countries used them as aid-guiding instruments to channel aid into areas where development was deeply desired.

But the MDGs have also attracted criticism for not addressing issues of human rights, inequality, migration and economic development and for failing to offer an integrated and holistic vision for development. Today, at the expiry

of the MDGs, a billion people still subsist on \$1.25 per day. This scenario must be set against the growing food insecurity and rising economic inequality.

The limitations of the MDGs were very much on the mind of world leaders when the process of devising the SDGs got under way in 2012. The process of crafting post-MDG goals flowed from the Rio+20 summit in 2012 which kick-started the formation of an open working group to devise a draft agenda on a set of new goals which were to blend with the post-MDG development agenda.

However, unlike the MDGs which were crafted in relative secrecy with limited participation of civil society, the process of the formulation of the SDGs was thrown open from the very beginning with the UN engaging in the widest possible consultation exercise. In particular, the participation of civil society groups was more pronounced this time round. Inevitably, this led to very ambitious and unwieldy goals initially. However, after a long period of deliberations, the number of sustainable goals was narrowed to 17 comprehensive and integrated goals. In addition, 169 targets were attached to the SDGs.

Together, the goals and targets compose a very comprehensive development agenda which address some of the deficiencies of the MDGs. The SDGs are concerned with ending hunger and malnutrition, promoting education, gender equality, the sustainable management of water and sanitation, access to energy and sustainable human habitat. In addition, the goals focus on climate action, forest, agriculture, infrastructure and growing inequality.

This represents a good augury. Yet there remains a lot of work to do in the coming months and years to put concrete flesh on the conceptual bare bones of the SDGs. One of the challenging tasks that lie ahead relates to the measurement of SDGs. To this end, the work on devising measurable indicators is set to get under way in March.

Another thorny issue concerns funding. In July last year, a major conference on the financing of SDGs was convened in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. However, the conference ended without suggestions for concrete action on finding cash to sustainably fund the goals.

The intergovernmental committee of experts on sustainable development financing has estimated that funding the social safety net to reduce hunger would alone cost \$66bn annually while the cost of upgrading the infrastructure (water, power, agriculture) could cost as much as \$7 trillion globally.

The projected sums are huge by any measure. So it would not be easy to find the money required to realise the aspirational goals enshrined in the SDGs. The real challenge facing the world leaders now is to cough up more cash with the corresponding political will to finance action on the SDGs.

As with the climate change deal, the money may prove a stumbling block when viewed against the sagging commitment of Western governments to overseas aid. However, despite these teething problems, developing countries can use these goals to reset and focus on development targets as did some of the countries in South Asia, to the prosperity of the domestic population and the applause of the wider world.

The writer is a development consultant and policy analyst.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1231996>

February 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 22nd TO FEBRUARY 28th 2016

AHSAN IQBAL APPOINTED UNDP'S 'CHAMPION MINISTER'

Dawn, February 26th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Reform Ahsan Iqbal has been appointed the United Nations Development Programme's 'champion minister' from the Asia Pacific region in recognition of his efforts to promote the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The title was conferred on him during the UNDP's 50th anniversary ministerial meeting at the UN Headquarters in New York, the planning commission announced here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Iqbal said that Pakistan had signed a long-term agreement with the UNDP, under which the national SDGs initiative had been launched to provide effective governance mechanisms for policy mainstreaming, coordination and monitoring.

The government plans to transform the current Millennium Development Goals fund into an SDG fund for community-based interventions, he said.

The minister pointed out that Pakistan was the first country to adopt the SDGs as part of the ‘National Development Agenda’ with its National Assembly adopting a resolution to this effect. “Pakistan is leading the development agenda by creating ownership. With support from the UNDP, an SDG secretariat has been established in parliament.” Mr Iqbal praised the UNDP for its support ‘without any political agenda’, adding that it was essential for the organisation to create strong and effective knowledge-sharing platforms. The UNDP is a trusted partner of the government and will remain so, he said.

The UNDP celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with ministers from across the globe in attendance, who discussed major development issues and the role of the organisation.

Addressing the meeting, UNDP Administrator Helen Clark said the organisation was working in over 170 poor and vulnerable countries and must rise to the challenge of advancing a “big, new, more complex, and transformational” sustainable development agenda.

“For fifty years, UNDP has been working on the frontlines of development, advocating for change and connecting countries to the knowledge, experience, and resources they need to help people build better lives,” she said.

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs adopted by 193-member states last September provide the framework for the next phase of the UNDP’s work. By the end of the programme, most countries will be middle-income countries, which would then change the UNDP’s role.

Representatives of several countries raised the issue of water security and scarcity and management of water resources. This is a growing problem that could aggravate in the years ahead. The UNDP has resolved to support such countries in resolving the looming crises through improved water governance and management of shared water resources.

Many spoke of how environmental degradation is hindering their ability to move ahead. Combating climate change, achieving sustainable management of natural resources, and managing the risks associated with natural disasters are some of the pressing problems of the time, they said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1241958>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 15th TO FEBRUARY 21st 2016

ASSEMBLIES WILL PLAY ROLE TOWARDS ACHIEVING TARGETS OF SDGS: SPEAKER

Business Recorder February 18, 2016

Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has said that national and provincial assemblies would play their role to achieve the targets of ‘Sustainable Development Goals’ (SDGs).

The Speaker said this while inaugurating the secretariat of Sustainable Development Goals in the Parliament House on Wednesday. Speakers, deputy speakers, members of the Parliament, and diplomats of 34 countries including China and Germany participated in the inaugural ceremony.

The Speaker National Assembly said that national and provincial assemblies would also make legislation to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goals. He said that commitment and good environment would ensure to face the challenges and to achieve the objectives.

“I also thank the Chinese for contributing to national energy. Today, China’s gift of solar power system to the parliament has generated 100 MW of electricity. In coming days, the Prime Minister would inaugurate the solar power system of the Parliament.

This exercise should be done at levels of provincial assembly and government departments,” he said. He also thanked the donors for capacity building of the Parliament. He stressed upon the need of a multi-pronged strategy on national and provincial level and called for a vigilant role of the National and Provincial SDG task forces in this regard.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/17507/>

March 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 14th TO March 20th 2016

SDGS CAN OFFER ROADMAP FOR KARACHI’S SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

The Express Tribune, March 14th, 2016.

Farhan Anwar

On January 1 this year, the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development –adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN Summit – officially came into force. Now, over the course of the next fifteen years, countries all over the world are expected to mobilise efforts to bring an end to all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change in an equitable manner.

The SDGs follow on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and have a much larger scope and mandate. While the MDG's focused on eight areas related with urban poverty and development challenges and were applicable only on developing countries, the SDG's bring within their fold 17 thematic areas with a strong focus on sustainability and climate change. They are also applicable globally on all countries of the world.

The goals are sensitive to the understanding that poverty can only end if efforts find synergy with strategies that stimulate economic growth, while targeting a wide range of social needs that include education, health, services along with tackling climate change and environmental protection.

In the Conference of Parties (COP) 21 held recently in Paris, France on the topic of climate change, much faith was placed on the successful implementation of the SDGs as the most viable framework available for meeting the climate change challenge. All governments, including Pakistan's, who have become signatories to the SDG's, are now expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of the 17 goals.

When it comes to prioritising the implementation framework in terms of spheres of governance, the local government tier enjoys a critical importance. As the document Getting Started with the Sustainable Development Goals – A Guide for Stakeholders, released in 2015 by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, UN, very clearly states, "Home to half of the world's people and three quarters of its economic output, cities will be a critical frontline of implementing the sustainable development agenda.

Cities will be dynamic test beds for new sustainable development strategies and approaches, and they will generate and compile considerable amounts of social, environmental, economic, and private sector data. City and local governments will provide a crucial conduit from the national level to local citizens and community groups".

Those vested with the powers and mandates to bring about large scale and systemic policy and development change in Karachi need to understand the importance of the SDG's that are going to be defining the global development agenda for the coming fifteen, if not many more years to follow. Critical to the success of the SDG's is the emphasis on structuring regional and global partnerships where the benefits can be both financial and also in the transferring of skills and experiences.

Large mega cities of the world are already developing multi-dimensional networking and partnerships for mutual benefit. Mega cities in the developing world share many common challenges and at the same time offer innovative best practices that, with suitable adaptations, can be replicated elsewhere.

However, the fact that Karachi can find a significant role and stature within these emerging urban alliances is nowhere to be seen. In fact, we are still struggling to get our city government in place!

What is fascinating about these goals is that they cover a wide range of human development challenges and call for an integrated approach by finding an interface between the goals to achieve the larger objective of sustainable development. The urban context is very visible particularly for a city like Karachi, that is grappling with economic, environmental and social challenges simultaneously.

While one goal specifically deals with sustainable cities and communities, there are others that find a resonance with the challenges we face such as poverty, water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, climate action, industry, innovation and infrastructure, and reduced inequalities, among others. The opportunity on offer is to integrate them in a holistic vision and roadmap that can, within its overall construct, define a sustainable development agenda for Karachi.

At the federal level, Pakistan has initiated action with the setting up of the SDG Secretariat in the National Assembly, and with federal planning and development minister Ahsan Iqbal being named the 'Champion Minister' by the UNDP, it is hoped such initiatives also filter down to our cities.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1065163/sdgs-can-offer-roadmap-for-karachis-sustainable-growth/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 29th TO March 6th 2016

AN AGENDA FOR HUMANITY

Dawn, March 5th, 2016

Ban Ki-Moon

MORE people desperately need humanitarian assistance than at any time since the founding of the United Nations. More warring parties are brazenly violating international humanitarian law. More resources than ever are needed to meet sharply escalating humanitarian needs. Yet we face the largest-ever funding shortfalls.

For these reasons and more, I am convening the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit, on May 23 and 24 in Istanbul. I am urging global leaders, international organisations and others to commit to deliver more and better for those in greatest need. There is no time to lose.

Climate change is affecting lives and livelihoods across our fragile planet. Brutal and seemingly intractable conflicts, violent extremism, transnational crime and growing inequality are devastating the lives of millions of men, women and children and are destabilising entire regions. More people have been forced to flee their homes than at any time since the Second World War.

Around the world, more than 125 million people need humanitarian assistance. If they were all in one country, it would be the eleventh largest nation on Earth, and one of the fastest growing.

Today's complex challenges cross borders. No single country or organisation can address them alone. We need to restore trust in the ability of our national, regional and international institutions to confront these challenges.

A sense of shared humanity must shape our politics and drive financial decisions. In advance of the Summit, I have set out an Agenda for Humanity as a framework for action, change and mutual accountability. It has five core responsibilities. First, leaders must intensify efforts to find political solutions to prevent and end conflict. The enormous human and economic cost makes conflict the biggest obstacle to human development. We must move from managing crises to preventing them.

Second, countries must uphold the norms that safeguard humanity. This means complying with international humanitarian and human rights law, and stopping the bombing and shelling of civilian targets and areas. It also means committing to national and international justice and ending impunity.

Third, we must leave no one behind – and we must reach those who are furthest behind, first. This means transforming the lives of the most vulnerable, including those living in conflict and in chronic poverty, and those living with the risk of natural hazards and rising sea levels.

We must reduce forced displacement, provide more regular and lawful opportunities for migration, empower women and girls and ensure quality education for all. We cannot meet the Sustainable Development Goals, agreed by world leaders last September, if we do not reach these people.

The fourth core responsibility is to move from delivering aid to ending need. We need to close the humanitarian-development divide for good. We must also anticipate crises, not wait for them to happen.

We must strengthen local leadership and capacity, reduce vulnerability, and increase the resilience of people and communities, who will always be the first and last responders in crises.

Fifth, we must find smart and innovative ways of mobilising funds. This will require diversifying and expanding the resource base and using a wider variety of financing tools.

I have proposed a new international financing platform with the World Bank to identify mechanisms to finance our response to protracted crises.

The Agenda for Humanity provides key actions and strategic shifts which the world requires to reduce humanitarian needs and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

I urge world leaders to come to the World Humanitarian Summit committed to promote sustainable human progress and a life of dignity and security for all.

The writer is Secretary-General of the United Nations. His report “One Humanity: Shared Responsibility” was published on Feb 9, 2016.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1243627>

April 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 25th TO MAY 1st 2016

REPORTING EVENTS: PAKISTAN URGES UN INFORMATION WING TO AVOID BIAS

Business Recorder, April 29, 2016

Pakistan has urged the United Nations Department of Information (DPI) to maintain neutrality in reporting news coverage of events and ensure that their reports were unbiased. Speaking in the Committee on Information, which oversees the work of DPI, Pakistani delegate Masood Anwar said neutrality in UN reports was “very important.” “We urge DPI to ensure that this neutrality is maintained and there is no bias for or against any member state in their reports,” Anwar, who is press minister at the Pakistan Mission to the UN, told delegates on Wednesday.

In his remarks, he called for developing a long-term strategy to create awareness about the two landmark decisions taken by the United Nations – Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Paris Climate Agreement – so as to help deliver on the promises that member states had made to improve the quality of life for peoples around the world, especially those in the developing countries.

The Pakistani delegate said those two UN moves “most important” as they have a long-term impact on Planet Earth and on the lives of the people. Pakistan, for its part, had developed a comprehensive long-term sustainable development policy framework, Vision 2025, taking into account the universally agreed Goals, he said. “We are strengthening our institutional structures at all levels to achieve the SDGs and accelerate climate action to tackle global warming.”

Drawing attention to the important work done by United Nations information centres, he expressed support for the activities undertaken by the country office in Pakistan. Referring to Pakistan’s historic role as a major troop contributor to UN Peacekeeping Operations, Anwar said DPI needed to do more to project the UN’s role and

contribution to the maintenance of peace and security through peacekeeping, and not allow actions of a few to dominate the narrative.

Noting that conflict and strife mar the global horizon today, the Pakistani delegate said the international community had to maintain unity in fighting the hydra-headed monster of terrorism and extremism. "Countering the narrative of these twisted ideologies is imperative," he said. "While remaining steadfast in our fight, we also need to address the root causes. Festering disputes, illegal military interventions, inter-racial tensions and defamation of religions, all provide fertile ground for conflict."

DPI could also play an important role in defusing tensions and promoting interfaith harmony, he said, adding it should develop programmes and social media campaigns at regional and international levels, involving journalists, civil society and academia to foster interfaith harmony to accomplish the objective.

Pakistan, on its part, is redoubling its own efforts in this direction, he pointed out. The Pakistan Mission organised a well-attended side event on the occasion of the World Interfaith Harmony Week this year on Countering Xenophobia through Interfaith Cooperation. "We also organised a "Sufi Night: Music of Peace" concert at the UN General Assembly to spread the message of peace."

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/41722/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 4th TO APRIL 10th 2016

PAKISTAN COMMITTED TO ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: IQBALIAN COMMITTED TO ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: IQBAL

Dawn, April 4th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Federal Mini-ster for Planning, Develop-ment and Reforms Ahsan Iqbal said on Sunday that Pakistan attached great importance to its commitments on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"Pakistan has accorded the highest priority to achieving the goals which will enable us to join the league of upper middle class countries by 2030," Mr Iqbal said while speaking at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) in Bangkok, said a press release issued here.

The forum is being held to discuss priorities for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia and Pacific region.

Mr Iqbal said the goals included zero poverty and hunger, universal access to health services, education facilities, modern energy services, clean water and sanitation.

The minister said that Pakistan was the first country to adopt SDGs 2030 agenda through a unanimous resolution of parliament.

"We believe that SDGs agenda for development isn't an international agenda; it is our own agenda. It reflects our ambition and desire to give our people better quality of life. Therefore, we must take ownership of SDGs with complete devotion and passion," he said.

Mr Iqbal said the government had conducted discussions on post-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with all stakeholders for coordinating and strengthening efforts at federal and provincial levels to achieve sustainable development and poverty reduction targets.

The consultation process underlined the need for national categorisation of SDGs, improved data collection and enforcement of monitoring mechanisms, he said.

Talking about measures being taken by the government for achieving SDGs, Mr Iqbal said the ministry concerned had been tasked with preparing a comprehensive national action plan for achieving the national SDGs.

The minister said that the Vision-2025 provided a comprehensive long-term strategy for achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development.

The seven pillars of Vision-2025, he said, were fully aligned with the SDGs, adding that the policy would strengthen the data collection process and increase the coverage of household data at the district level.

This will enable the government to monitor the poverty and vulnerability of the population in all dimensions.

He said that at the federal level, a SDGs Monitoring and Coordination Unit, in coordination with UNDP, was being set up to serve as a national coordinating entity with similar units in the provinces.

Mr Iqbal said the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) constituted the government's poverty reduction planning which had prioritised 17 pro-poor sectors, including environment, sanitation, health, education, population planning and rural development.

Giving details, he said, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) had been set up as an apex governmental non-profit organisation for community-driven development.

He said the prime minister had announced an agriculture package of Rs341 billion, which was aimed at helping small and medium farmers through provision of direct cash support, soft loans and introducing new technologies in the sector.

Another revolutionary step for empowering youths was the Prime Minister's Youth programme, he said. The programme included schemes such as business loan scheme, interest-free loan scheme, skill development programme and free laptop scheme, with a budget outlay of Rs20bn.

The minister said that institutional mechanism for empowering women had been expanded and strengthened, adding that laws had been promulgated at federal and provincial levels to stop violence against women and sexual harassment of women at workplaces.

For education, he said, a national campaign had been launched by the prime minister in partnership with the provinces to enrol all out of school children into schools to achieve universal primary enrolment by 2018.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1249883/pakistan-committed-to-achieving-sustainable-development-goals-iqbal>

Dawn, April 7th, 2016

NOT infrequently, those who are in positions of administering to the country's needs make observations that leave many wondering whether he or she is indulging in outright falsification, or living in ignorance of Pakistan's ground realities.

Consider, for example, what the minister for planning, Ahsan Iqbal, had to say on Sunday at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in Bangkok. He observed that the level of priority afforded to the Sustainable Development Goals was such that it would "enable us to join the league of upper-middle class countries" by the target year.

Among other talk of progress towards the SDG agenda, he added that Pakistan aimed to achieve universal primary enrolment by 2018. The forum at which he was speaking was held to discuss the region's priorities for the implementation of the 2030 agenda, set by the UN in September last year in a global follow-up to the 2000 to 2015 Millennium Development Goals plan — most of which Pakistan missed.

The SDGs constitute a second push for the world to fight endemic global issues on 17 goals, including ending poverty, hunger, inequality and injustice, tackling climate change, and achieving universal education.

These are lofty aims, but the realities are daunting. Take the case of education, and the rosy prospect of universal enrolment held out by the minister. The good intentions are there: Article 25-A of the Constitution requires the state to provide free and compulsory education to every child between the ages of five and 16.

Yet study after study has shown that the state of this sector is largely abysmal; to quote just one, carried out by leading education campaigner Alif Ailaan, we are currently in the grip of an "education crisis of unprecedented proportions", with 25 million boys and girls out of school — nearly half of all children in the country.

Even where children go to school, the quality of education and infrastructure is poor, staff absenteeism is rife, and corporal punishment rampant. The situation in the context of other SDGs shows similarly large gaps between good intentions and actual deeds.

Where hunger is concerned, alarm bells were rung years ago over the levels of malnutrition prevailing in large parts of the country.

The push for gender equality has included pieces of legislation that may prove advantageous, such as specifically criminalising 'honour' killings, domestic abuse and sexual harassment at the workplace — but the terrain traversed by the country's women remains overwhelmingly hostile.

What the country needs urgently is for the political and administrative classes to come together and make development a real priority rather than a talking point.

The track record for this sector in general and the MDGs in particular has been one of plans, committees and overlaps, with very little achieved on the ground. Unless this mindset changes, sustainable development will prove elusive.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1250466>

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Business Recorder April 10, 2016

Dr Shamshad Akhtar

Asia and the Pacific are recognised for their leadership in global output, trade and development. The region has a new opportunity to lead on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – a multidimensional, multisectoral and multiagency undertaking.

In 2016, the first year of implementation for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), our region faces significant challenges: prioritizing SDG implementation; pace and sequencing; meeting the massive data and statistics requirements; as well mobilizing the necessary means of implementation.

The demands of this ambitious and complex agenda are extraordinary. It is the most comprehensive framework ever adopted by world leaders to eradicate poverty and ensure access to basic services for all. It offers an unprecedented opportunity for the Asia-Pacific region to transform its economies through an integrated development framework, balancing the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability.

Regional transformation is, therefore, urgently needed. Asia-Pacific economic growth has moderated in the wake of delays in the global economic recovery and given the lack of aggregate demand. This has been compounded by rising inequalities and the fact that more than 1.4 billion people still live in extreme poverty across our region, suffering from hunger, water insecurity, poor sanitation, insufficient access to energy and a range of other serious challenges to human dignity and well-being.

Real transformation requires not only revitalized economic growth, but also progress on all three dimensions of sustainable development. Defining national priorities will be critical, but implementation also calls for a change of political mind-set, a commitment to effective leadership, policy and institutional coordination, to balance the interests of our people and our planet.

Implementation also demands significant financial resources. The 2030 Agenda could cost Asia and the Pacific as much as \$2.5 trillion per year to close infrastructure gaps; provide universal access to social protection, health and education, as well as action on climate change.

Getting the baseline statistical indicators right demands an overhaul of national statistical systems, and finding mechanisms to draw on the new and innovative data generated by private providers.

Deployment of science, technology and innovation calls for strong cooperation that goes beyond North-South modalities, to include South-South cooperation as well. Success in Asia and the Pacific is contingent on sufficient resources being invested. In 2013 alone, Asian developing economies spent more than \$650 billion on research and development. We also need to create more open flows of information and knowledge, through networks that focus on the future we want.

For the SDGs to succeed, Asia-Pacific countries must take a more integrated approach, paying greater attention to governance and institutional capacity shortcomings. Development cooperation has to start at the national level, between states and local governments, with municipalities as the primary focus for delivery on the SDGs.

Regional and global cooperation will also be critical, to deepen multilateralism and strengthen development finance institutions, directing greater resources to sustainable development.

We also need to address systemic issues, such as the need for broader participation, multi-stakeholder partnerships and stronger accountability. To improve accountability, UN Member States have agreed on the importance of a coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review process at the global, regional and national levels.

It will also be important to complement 'top-down' strategic policy leadership with 'ground-up' action, through civil society and social movements. Effective engagement at all levels of government will strengthen implementation and ensure that inequality is properly addressed so that 'no one is left behind'.

Developing regional understanding of the SDGs and harnessing their means of implementation are core strategic priorities for the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). In 2014, ESCAP convened the inaugural Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, which is meeting again this week, engaging senior leaders from national and local governments, civil society, business and the international community, in a dialogue on implementing the 2030 Agenda.

The 2016 Forum will also discuss a way forward for a regional roadmap to support member States' implementation of the 2030 Agenda over the next 15 years.

Regional cooperation is critical to galvanize national action on the SDGs, and ESCAP stands ready to support the countries of our region in their efforts to achieve sustainable development outcomes.

(The writer is an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP. She has been the UN's Sherpa for the G20 and previously served as Governor of the Central Bank of Pakistan and Vice President of the MENA Region of the World Bank.

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May 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 16TH TO MAY 22ND 2016

FOOD MINISTER TO CALL MEETING TO DISCUSS SDGS

The Express Tribune, May 17th, 2016

Peer Muhammad

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of National Food Security and Research Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan has decided to hold a meeting of all provincial agriculture ministers to discuss the priority issues laid down under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for eliminating hunger and reducing poverty.

The minister took the decision after meeting World Food Programme (WFP) Regional Director David Kaatrud, who called on the minister on Monday to discuss ongoing WFP programmes in Pakistan.

“To place all initiatives on one page, it was decided that the minister would call a meeting of the provincial agriculture ministers so that priority issues are adequately addressed,” said an official in the ministry.

The WFP regional director highlighted broader parameters of the Zero Hunger Programme and the SDGs in Pakistan. He praised the role of Pakistan as the largest contributor among host governments to the WFP globally.

Bosan, while appreciating the role of WFP in Pakistan, pointed to the discordance within donors because of which the goal of poverty reduction seemed elusive.

Furthermore, both parties acknowledged a lack of coordination between federal agencies and provincial governments and the need to develop better liaison.

Bosan outlined the WFP’s assistance for conducting a food security analysis in Pakistan and the formulation of national food strategy.

In the analysis, WFP representatives noted that although the country had a surplus food production, there was sufficient population with no access to adequate food and faced the threat of food insecurity.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1104508/food-minister-to-call-meeting-to-discuss-sdgs/>

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June 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 27TH TO JULY 2 ND 2016

SYMPOSIUM TO DISCUSS ACCESS TO WATER FOR ALL

The Express Tribune, June 30th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: A high-level symposium on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets to ensure that no one is left behind in access to water and sanitation is scheduled to be held from August 9 to 11, 2016 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

It is being organised by the government of Tajikistan in cooperation with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

According to a statement issued by the embassy of Tajikistan, the meeting will bring together government officials and policymakers for water resource management, experts from international organisations, academic and research communities, business executives and representatives of civil society groups.

It is aimed at strengthening the capacity of national and local governments to promote integrated water resource management, share knowledge and experience in innovative practices for improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene, increase efficiency in water consumption and reduce water pollution.

It will also focus on protecting water basins and ecosystems, advancing international cooperation and partnerships, fostering regional and multilateral cooperation and launching specific partnership initiatives for implementing the Sustainable Development Goal 6 and related targets.

The symposium will provide a platform for deliberation on the ways that will help achieve the goal and targets, including the international decade of action entitled “Water for Sustainable Development” initiated by Tajikistan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1133170/symposium-discuss-access-water/>

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July 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 25TH TO JULY 31ST 2016

IMPLEMENTING ANTI-POVERTY SDGS: PAKISTAN OFF TO A GOOD START: MALEEHA

Business recorder, 25 July 2016

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has told a gathering of diplomats and experts at the United Nations that progress was being made in implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the global development agenda but will require all parts of the UN family and its partners to work together to meet all the targets set by the ambitious 15-year undertaking.

“SDGs are indeed coming to life and we all are contributing towards this,” Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi said at a side-event to the high-level political forum taking place to review implementation of SDGs. “But then”, the Pakistani envoy added, “this is just a beginning, we have many miles to go.”

The side-event was co-hosted by Pakistan, South Korea, Sierra Leone and the UN Development Group (UNDG).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN Summit” calls on countries to begin efforts to achieve the 17 SDGs aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for all by 2030.

The goals address the needs of people in both developed and developing countries, emphasizing that no one should be left behind. Broad and ambitious in scope, the Agenda addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental, as well as important aspects related to peace, justice and effective institutions. Ambassador Lodhi said Pakistan had always underlined the essential role of the UN Development System (UNDS) to realize the objectives set by the new Agenda, in line with national policies, priorities and needs.

Pakistan regarded UNDG as a key development partner, and with the support of U.N. country teams preparations were started for implementation of 2030 agenda “very early”. That cooperation continued to be strengthened and further expanded.

“We launched our National Development Strategy, Vision 2025 – last year,” the Pakistani envoy said, adding that it was fully aligned with the SDGs. Inclusion of the sustainability perspective in national economic and development plans had been an overarching aspect of this strategy. Within weeks of the Agenda’s adoption, Ambassador Lodhi said Pakistan was able to launch the SDGs in Pakistan. Parliament adopted the SDGs as Pakistan’s development agenda, and established a secretariat to serve as a resource centre for the SDGs.

Pakistan, she said, was thus among the pioneers, demonstrating and mobilizing full political support and ownership. “Our provincial governments are now aligning their strategies and annual development plans for coordinated implementation of SDGs”, Ambassador Lodhi said, adding that UN agencies are extending technical support for this coordinated delivery.

SDG Support Units, with technical support from UNDP, were being established at the national and provincial level. Co-financed by the national and the respective provincial governments, these units serve as platforms for national coordination on SDGs.

“The federal government and my country’s four provincial governments have committed a total of \$ 15 million for localization of SDGs in Pakistan over the next 5 years,” she said. At the same time, the Pakistani envoy said that meaningful implementation demands matching resources. “This, we feel is the most critical challenge. It was one of the primary reasons for the sub-optimal performance of the MDGs. Raising trillions of dollars every year to realize the SDGs would be a real test,” she said.

National ownership of the agenda demands optimization of domestic resource mobilization and prioritization, Lodhi said, adding that an enabling international environment that promotes and complements domestic policies and priorities, however, would remain essential.

“We are concerned about deteriorating core resources of the UNDS and increased reliance on non-core resources,” the Pakistan envoy said. “At a time when we are setting ambitious benchmarks and time lines for achieving the SDGs, this trend does not engender confidence.”—APP

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/07/25/17-page/779173-news.html>

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August 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 29th TO SEPTEMBER 4th 2016

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: PUNJAB INAUGURATES SDG SUPPORT UNIT

The Express Tribune, September 1st, 2016.

LAHORE: Punjab Finance Minister Dr Aisha Ghaus Pasha has said that the province fully supported the Sustainable Development Goals and it was aligning its resources to achieve them.

Pasha, while inaugurating the Punjab SDGs support unit at Punjab Planning and Development department on Wednesday, emphasised the need to address governance issues confronting the implementation of SDGs, especially the issue of inequality.

“We should act collectively for our future generations. Therefore, priority-setting for SDGs should be done at the highest political level.”

The SDGs Support Unit has been established by the Planning & Development Department with technical assistance from UNDP and the Planning Commission of Pakistan.

Addressing the ceremony, Planning & Development Board Chairman Muhammad Jehanzeb Khan emphasised the need to have a robust analysis of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to understand the causes of Pakistan’s poor performance.

He further highlighted the need for a solid framework for SDGs that builds on concrete lessons and how policies and investments can be aligned so that they become the touchstone for achievement of SDGs.

Speaking on the occasion, Uzma Bukhari, MPA and Convener of SDGs Task Force, said that it was heartening to note that Punjab was the first province to have the SDGs Support Unit operational, which showed Punjab government’s ownership of the SDGs.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1173854/sustainable-development-goals-punjab-inaugurates-sdg-support-unit/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 22ND TO AUGUST 28TH 2016

The Express Tribune, August 26th, 2016.

KARACHI: Are we degrading or over-exploiting the resources given to us by nature with our lifestyle?

The question was asked by Shehri – Citizens for a Better Environment’s (CBE) Farhan Anwar while addressing a session on ‘Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – A Roadmap for Implementation’ on Thursday.

The event was organised by Shehri – CBE in partnership with Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung at the Institute of Engineers Pakistan (IEP) building.

Anwar pointed out that there are historical markers of when the exploitation of natural resources started. “It was the age of industrialisation,” he said, adding that the transition from agriculture to industrialisation started in the 1970s and it was booming by the 1990s.

According to Anwar, industrialisation has generated implications such as the birth of surplus economy – when we start producing more than what we require – exploitation of resources and phenomenal population growth and birth of modern city, which has formed factory towns.

Due to all these reasons, he said that the most potent challenge that humanity is facing now is climate change. Ninety per cent commercial activities generate greenhouse gases, which lead to climate change, he said, adding that most of such activities are based in cities.

Many issues and problems faced by Karachi are directly associated with hinterland, said NED University architecture and planning chairperson Dr Noman Ahmed while speaking on the occasion.

The national and regional planning and corresponding implementation – a prime pre-requisite for creating equilibrium between Karachi and its adjoining region – is grossly missing, he claimed.

Speaking on the challenges the city faces, he said that unipolar urbanisation is taking place in Karachi, which means that people from rural areas come to Karachi alone and don’t go to other cities of the province. This leads to stagnant urbanisation in secondary cities of Sindh, including Hyderabad, added Ahmed.

Meanwhile, social activist, Roland deSouza said that the leaders of the country are not heading in the right direction. “Municipal functions are being moved to provincial level,” he said. “If [the] provincial government is going to construct roads and pick up garbage, then who is going to do work of the provincial government such as making laws?”

The year began with the activation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) when, on January 1, the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – earlier adopted by world leaders in September, 2015, at an historic United Nations summit – officially came into force.

Now, over the course of the next 15 years, countries all over the world are expected to mobilise efforts to bring an end to all the forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change in an equitable manner. The SDGs follow on the experience of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and have a much larger scope and mandate.

Anwar said that the holy grail of sustainability lies in three ‘E’s’, which include environment, economy and equity. A sustainable city, according to him, is one which is economically vibrant and prosperous, where growth is not at the cost of physical or natural environment.

Shedding light on the five ‘P’s’ of the SDGs, which correspond to people, he said they also include planet, partnership, peace and prosperity.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1169966/towards-sustainability- uncovering-effects-overexploiting-natural-resources/>

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September 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 19th TO SEPTEMBER 25th 2016

PAKISTAN’S CHALLENGES: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS 2015-2030 AGENDA 2030 COMPRISES 17 SDGs WITH 169 TARGETS.

Dawn, Sep 22, 2016

Ali Tauqeer Sheikh

In the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lies the solution to Pakistan’s three central challenges: development, democracy and defence. That said, the SDGs will provide the glue that holds this fragile triangle. Implementing the UN’s 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, if realised as an integrated policy package, will also lead to long-term economic prosperity, human and environmental development.

However, aside from external threats, a poor score card on meeting the 17 SDGs and the 169 targets specified by the UN will pose a serious, non-traditional threat to the country’s national security. That said, it is time to address what could turn out to be more like 17 socio-economic risks to Pakistan’s security and progress, if targets remain unmet, especially those related to poverty alleviation, gender empowerment and climate change adaption.

The SDGs cut across all areas of government – from health and education to ending poverty and achieving gender equality, through to tackling climate change and utilising natural resources sustainably. The objectives underpin good governance and integrate three dimensions of sustainable development – economic development, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

These are ambitious and complex goals requiring clearly mandated institutions and unflinching commitment to provide resources from the national exchequer for a decade and half. And this implies commitment that is as strong as that for acquiring nuclear technology. Present and future civilian and military leaderships will need to follow through on this commitment.

If these goals and targets are too many for the country's present resource capacity, then Pakistan can still decide to pick half, or even one-third, during this initial phase. While learning how to deliver sector-based integrated targets and indicators, the government can expand its ambition. There is no international obligation to sign off on all goals, targets or indicators. Government ambition has to be measured against its ability to carry out policy and institutional reforms. UN Resident Coordinator, Neil Buhne and the Federal Minister Planning, Development and Reform, Ahsan Iqbal signed a MoU for the implementation of the SDGs in October 2015.—Photo courtesy: UNDP

Most national and provincial policies and action plans are developed in silos and are not backed by financial resources, timelines or strong political will. Provinces will, therefore, need to champion and drive the process of localising and prioritisation.

If the history of vertical projects is an indicator, leaving it to federal level decision-makers will be risky and too top down for the present political culture. Therefore, the federal government should provide added support for certain specific SDGs via the National Finance Commission awards for these goals to be reliably anchored in provincial annual development plans.

Fortunately, the Planning Commission has begun to engage provincial and development departments (P&DDs) that would serve as nodes leading to the formation of special units or SDG centers.

Other provinces can learn from Sindh, where Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah's government has taken the lead in working on these development goals. But more important is working on the sustained capacity-building of those tasked with initiating and implementing actual work on approved development projects.

The bottom line is clear: every rupee spent on SDGs in public expenditure needs to be tracked through a uniform and transparent budget coding system, and individual projects within provincial annual development programs must be measured against SDG indicators. This will provide a rare opportunity to improve interprovincial coordination in development plans where the policy landscape needs to be SDG compliant.

Additionally, political parties must work to mainstream sustainable development within national discourse. Their manifestos might highlight social and economic issues, but ensuring they are SDG compliant would shape the electoral debate to specificities rather than broad rhetorical pledges.

National and provincial assemblies can also lead this process; particularly since the federal government has already created a non-partisan parliamentary taskforce comprising national and provincial parliamentarians, and have allocated funds. This taskforce should work with think-tanks and the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services. This, in turn, will prompt the media and their political pundits to follow almost immediately.

To add, Pakistan is needlessly struck with an archaic method of budgetary planning. Over the years, the state has developed a notoriously weak reputation when developing, implementing or monitoring social sector projects, resulting in globally dismal and embarrassingly poor indicators.

That the SDGs will provide an opportunity to revisit the way the government approaches and undertakes development is something to be explored. Meanwhile, federal and provincial governments need to determine governance structures and accountability mechanisms required at national and local levels.

This must not be sidestepped. Likewise, the P&DDs will need to formulate six prerequisites for successfully implementing the SDGs: governance and oversight, goal and indicator setting, implementation mechanisms, coordination, developing budgets and, finally, allocating resources.

Going forward, new models of public-private partnership need to be tested. Policymakers should begin by proactively engaging the private sector, research universities, think-tanks and civil society, including professional associations.

The SDGs are perhaps the best vehicle to lift more than 50 million people out of poverty when they earn less than two dollars a day by enriching their lives and livelihood options. Delivering on these goals will also help enhance Pakistan's ability to emerge as one of the world's leading economies and, while doing so, strengthen national security.

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 5TH TO SEPTEMBER 10TH 2016

SLOW ECONOMIC GROWTH CLOUDS FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY

Dawn, September 10th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The deteriorating global economic outlook is jeopardising the efforts to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 — the first UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) — according to a new study released by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

The study, conceptualised and financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), takes into account changes in projected growth rates in both key driver economies, such as the United States, Europe and China, and in many developing countries.

Many developing countries seem likely to see a substantial downturn in economic growth over the 2015-30 implementation period of SDGs, compared with the recent years of strong growth, says the study released this week. It estimates that the extreme poverty rate in 2030 will be 5.2 per cent, not the 4.8pc projected without the global economic downturn. This will leave an additional 38 million people still living on less than \$1.90 a day, the benchmark for extreme poverty, by that year.

The poorest countries will see the greatest changes in projected declines in poverty rates, with over 5 percent of their population remaining below the poverty line. Overall 38 million fewer people will leave extreme poverty compared to earlier projections. Farm households are at particular risk in middle-income countries, with over 1.5pc more of the farming population potentially not escaping extreme poverty in these countries.

“The economic slowdown doesn’t mean that the poverty rate won’t decline substantially between now and 2030,” said David Laborde, senior research fellow at IFPRI. “But the economic downturn is hindering the effort to fight extreme poverty. And if we are serious about completely eliminating absolute poverty, we’ve got to identify the right policies and investments to raise the incomes of poor people and reduce their vulnerability to shocks, especially in rural areas.” Robust economic growth in developing countries — which has far outpaced that of most high-income countries — contributed mightily to achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals of cutting extreme poverty by half five years ahead of its 2015 deadline.

Rural areas, where most of the world’s 900 million poor people live, will be hit hardest, with poverty both higher than in urban areas and more adversely affected by the slowdown, the study finds.

The projections offer a gloomy look at the world’s struggle to eliminate poverty, its prospects complicated by an unstable global economic environment, including events such as Brexit, large-scale migrations due to wars or climate shocks, and other problems that threaten growth.

Almost all of the countries with large numbers remaining in extreme poverty in 2030 will be in sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia, the study shows. Worldwide, more than 130 out of 189 countries will experience reduced income growth, the projections show, with the average global GDP growth rate falling from 4.1pc to 3.1pc between 2011 and 2030.

That one percentage point per year difference will effectively trap tens of millions of people in extreme poverty, unless additional steps are taken to address their predicament, it says.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1283103>

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October 20

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 17TH TO OCTOBER 23RD 2016

HOW CPEC CAN HELP THE SDGS

Dawn October 22nd, 2016

Ali Tauqeer Sheikh

THIS newspaper's initiative to help mainstream Sustainable Development Goals through a series of articles focusing on the SDGs has brought forth the complexity and policy choices that need to be made by the federal government and the provinces. One question, however, still needs to be raised: how will the SDGs be financed?

No budgetary estimates are available on the finances needed to meet the cost of any of the 17 SDGs 169 targets. In fact, conversations on methodologies for calculating such costs are barely in the preliminary stages, as are the district-level target baselines to determine the scale and progressive pace of investments needed over the remaining 14 years to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The SDGs won't come cheap. We will need to mobilise tens of millions every year over the next decade and half in public- and private-sector capital. There is no doubt that we will need to significantly ramp up both public and private investments in two basic categories.

First, in social sectors such as education, health, drinking water and sanitation, where results can be measured with relative ease. The state cannot absolve itself of its fundamental responsibility of providing these services to its citizens. A long-term commitment for budgetary allocation, therefore, needs to come from annual development plans, irrespective of donor commitments.

Domestic private sector investments are already heavy on health and education. Private health service providers serve almost 75pc of the population, and about 40pc of Pakistan's schools result from private-sector investments.

With well-designed and coordinated policies, financing models and instruments, and incentive programmes, additional investments need to be unlocked. The government will need to create conditions that encourage private investments for quality delivery and to ensure equity and inclusiveness. A 'leave no one behind' principle needs to be followed by a 'reaching the farthest first' policy.

We need to put our money where our mouth is and allocate additional resources to the districts with poorest poverty and HDI indicators in each province to lift them up to the national averages.

Second, for SDGs dealing with infrastructure, urban development, energy, transportation, mass transit systems, etc the country needs to strengthen its capacity to access international green finance.

The cost of the capital for green growth has created a new global ecosystem of financial instruments and policies. In fact, this has become an essential first step to stimulate sustainable economic growth for green jobs.

The government needs to develop policy instruments and guidelines to encourage the banking system to make green investments. If the global green bond market has more than quadrupled since 2013, why can't Pakistan avail itself of this rather than spending expensive cash on new motorways and colourful bus lines in the cities? If private firms can fund wind and solar parks in neighbouring countries in the region, the government can also attract them by developing guidelines to encourage banking institutions to make green investments.

The green financing mechanism can be widely adopted so that capital markets can allocate financing to low-carbon sectors of the economy. These measures include subsidies for clean energy, pricing of carbon emissions, emissions trading and taxes. Reducing the price of low carbon technologies to make them more attractive for private entrepreneurs and investors can help access international climate finance from the Green Climate Fund and other such options. Investments in low-carbon transportation, energy-efficient production and technologies, clean energy for the cities can — and should — come from the private sector so that the government is able to prioritise social-sector investments.

In other words, the argument is for us to correct the present imbalance: instead of spending the bulk of its financial resources on mega infrastructural projects such as motorways and bus lines, the government needs to prioritise specific social-sector SDG targets and create a policy environment to mobilise private-sector resources, particularly international green finance, for infrastructural needs. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor offers Pakistan precisely this opportunity.

Instead of simply being an 'economic' corridor, CPEC can become an environmental corridor. CPEC can spearhead the development of regional renewable energy trade, expand to Pakistan China's nationwide carbon market, which is already the world's largest, to become a regional market. China's share of global green bond market is over 40pc.

Benefiting from the Chinese experience, Pakistan can launch green bonds under CPEC. This strategic move alone can help Pakistan address about 50 SDG indicators and, hopefully, attract direct foreign investment.

CPEC is part of a grand Chinese vision for enhanced trade with 60 or so countries, and 40 of them will be facilitated by CPEC alone. China considers it as a model and a pilot project that will give fruit to a 'bumper crop' in the future. In Pakistan, on the other hand, it is mostly (and erroneously) conceived as a transit trade facility.

Opinion leaders in various provinces are bickering that the transit routes should pass through their favourite areas. Cargo trailers passing through our villages alone will not deliver prosperity. Of some \$51 billion committed under

CPEC, about \$30bn will be spent on the power sector alone. Visiting Pakistani delegates are often reminded by their Chinese hosts to invest in education so as to harvest the ‘bumper crop’.

Pakistan and China share many SDG challenges, ranging from increasing inequality to making cities sustainable, from combating climate change to managing water or protecting oceans and forests. It’s a historic opportunity for Pakistan to weave its SDG targets in the accelerated pace of CPEC. Equally important, CPEC can serve as a model in acceleration for some SDG indicators.

Meeting the SDG challenge will be costly, but we cannot afford to do without it. Luckily, the country is rich in ideas, models, and the intellectual capital necessary to fulfil this agenda. What is needed now is leadership from the policy community to prioritise the development of a system that is designed to succeed.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1291406>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 3RD TO OCTOBER 9TH 2016

ASPIRATION

INTO REALITY

Dawn, October 6th, 2016

I.A. Rehman

THE realization that the exclusion of improved governance from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda for 2015 was a major cause of the failure of many countries (including Pakistan) to achieve the targets has led to the inclusion of this objective in the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Now, SDG 16 has all signatories to the new development goals to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” The unexceptionable rationale for this goal, according to the World Bank Group (World Development Indicators 2016), is: “Peaceful nations governed with fairness and transparency, provide the optimal platforms for implementing development strategies and programmes.

However, many states are in fragile situations, with citizens and their daily lives compromised by fear, conflict, unjust laws, and opaque governance. The success of the SDGs in such areas depends on achieving livable and calm communities supported by reliable and accountable institutions.”

Under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SDG 16 has 12 targets that include reduction in violence and related death rates; an end to abuse, trafficking, exploitation, violence and torture of children; rule of law and equal access to justice; substantial reduction in corruption and bribery; effective, accountable and transparent institutions; responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making; provision of legal identity for all, including birth registration; public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms; and strengthening of institutions to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

Pakistan’s policy-makers are not familiar with such rhetoric. They should recall the charter of responsible governance outlined by the Quaid-i-Azam on August 11, 1947. Mr Jinnah had declared the government’s foremost duties as maintaining law and order so that the life, property and religious beliefs of all were fully protected; to stop bribery and corruption with an iron hand; to have zero tolerance for nepotism and jobbery; to treat religion as citizens’ private affair and guarantee all citizens, regardless of their belief or creed, equal membership of the new nation.

Since May 2014, when the National Economic Council adopted the Pakistan Vision 2025, the official discourse has revolved around seven pillars and 25 goals that include: development of human and social capital; sustained inclusive growth; and energy, water and food security.

The gains have been precisely spelt out — from reducing poverty by 50pc by 2025, to winning 25 medals in the Asian Games. However, familiarity with the rhetoric of development and proficiency in fixing eye-catching targets do not necessarily imply possession of the capacity to translate wishes into reality. That said, as things stand, Pakistan faces formidable difficulties in realising the targets set for SDG 16.

The 12 targets can be coalesced into fewer categories by separating tasks that can be completed through administrative tightening up from those that require none-too-easy political and social engineering.

For instance, respect for citizens’ rights to life, liberty and security, control of crime, and protection of children against abuse, exploitation and violence can be better secured by enforcing a uniform system of modern policing, that is at present absent, reforming the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code, withdrawing unjust laws, judicial reforms, and ensuring proper implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child — though all these tasks are easier said than done.

Somewhat harder will be the realisation of goals pertaining to transparency and effective accountability. The fact that the government has been deferring the enactment of the Right to Information bill, that has been hailed by international

experts as nearly perfect, is not reflective of its desire to free people of 'opaque governance'. Likewise the muddled debate on accountability, in which accountability of the other seems to be the motto of the main contenders, does not encourage hope of a breakthrough towards genuine and effective accountability.

The moment there is movement towards the objectives of creating inclusive institutions, equality of citizens and an end to all forms of discrimination on the basis of belief, gender, ethnicity or social status, that we run into barriers erected under the myths about ideology. Removal of these bars will demand greater political foresight and strength of commitment than governments in Pakistan and their opponents have ever demonstrated.

The toughest undertaking will be the creation of a system of governance that is both representative and responsible. Over the years, institutions of democratic governance have been destroyed, not only during frequent spells of authoritarian rule but also by the tendency of elected rulers to adopt authoritarian ways. The country must have governments that function within the Constitution, which do not replace cabinet rule with prime ministerial fiat — for which the Supreme Court recently censured the government.

Pakistan needs a political system that can, for instance, stabilise Balochistan through a political solution addressing the alienation of its people, a system that goes beyond the 18th Amendment (instead of craving for its roll-back), and that is capable of rejecting the thesis of militant extremists instead of competing with them. If Pakistan cannot move towards a complete overhaul of governance, its objectives and implanted policies, it will not be able to achieve even simpler targets, such as the registration of births and the control of crime, and will remain trapped in a 'fragile situation.'

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1288358/pakistans-challenges-sustainable-development-goals-2015-2030-translating-aspiration-into-reality>

Dawn October 8th, 2016

Ishrat Husain

THE UN agencies and the development community have rejoiced at the successful completion of the 2015 summit that launched the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with 36 topics and 169 targets to be achieved by 2030. No doubt, the SDGs put a spotlight on some of the world's biggest issues such as globalisation, rising urbanisation, new demographic patterns, technological revolution and climate change, which are likely to disrupt our lives in the next 20-30 years.

It is but natural that global leaders should have put their heads together and come up with plans and actions to mitigate the adverse impact and maximise the benefits of these forces. The question that arises, though, is whether the SDG agenda is appropriate and adequate to address these issues. Here the rejoicing turns into skepticism. At least seven factors can be identified that do not provide much optimism about the attainment of these goals.

First, the SDGs are not a continuation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but are quite different as they cover a much wider canvas — advanced and developing countries — compared to MDGs, which were confined to the developing world. The level of effort required to reach common understandings and resolve conflicts between these two groups with divergent interests is bound to be quite intense.

Second, the MDGs, with only seven goals were focused on a main theme: to cut in half the proportion of the population living below the poverty line by 2015 compared to 1990. All other goals — universal primary education, gender equality and health — were aimed at contributing towards the overarching theme of poverty reduction. These goals were quantifiable, measurable and verifiable. The SDGs do not have any overarching theme or an integrative framework to encapsulate their 17 goals. The goals are too vague, unquantifiable and, therefore, are not amenable to measurement or verification and, hence, unattainable.

Third, these goals have been produced as a result of negotiations and consensus building among multiple stakeholders — 193 governments, UN agencies and multilateral organisations, private businesses, labour, NGOs, academics, etc. As each of these groups is wedded to their own single or multiple issues, the final outcome represents a contrived consensus accommodating all these diverse issues into an incoherent framework. The parts of the sum in this case exceed the sum itself.

Fourth, the danger in putting together a compilation in a linear fashion without evaluating the costs, benefits and the trade-offs involved is that the SDGs have become a 'wish list' that cannot be assailed. Who would, for example,

disagree with the statement “[w]e resolve to build a better future for the millions who have been denied the chance to lead decent, dignified and rewarding lives.” Or “[p]eople who are vulnerable must be empowered.”

Would the elitist power structure and the political economy in countries such as Pakistan allow this to happen? Empirical evidence from countries that had made some advances such as Thailand, Turkey and Argentina, among others, leads to quite the contrary conclusion. Entrenched groups usually displaced vulnerable groups from the spaces they were occupying.

Fifth, the international enabling environment today is more unfavourable compared to the buoyant and upbeat days of late 1990s and early 2000s when the MDGs were first announced. The global recession of 2008, the slowdown of economic activity throughout the world, the refugee and immigration crises, Brexit and stresses on the European Union, the popular perception that jobs in advanced countries are lost because of trade, the rise of nationalist sentiments in Europe and the US, the shifting economic balance in favour of China and Asia are pushing political leaders of these countries (US and European countries) to move away from greater integration with the rest of the world, thereby adopting an insular outlook.

Sixth, given this environment, resource availability to invest and finance these highly ambitious, costly and complex goals is going to be a major constraint. In 2015, official development assistance as well as private capital flows to developing countries declined. The political pressures are to help the poor and less privileged communities in their own countries rather than finance the kleptocratic regimes and tax evading elites of developing countries. The bill over implementing the SDGs over the next 15 years would spill into trillions of dollars.

Seventh, is the a gigantic task for each country to determine its requirements, devise strategies, design plans, assess skills and finances, assign responsibilities and continuously track progress. Huge coordination among different tiers of the government, and between the government, and the private sector and civil society organisations, would be a herculean task for countries already facing capacity and implementation weaknesses.

What could have been a better option? As the MDG experience shows, it can be argued that the goal of cutting the proportion of the population living below the poverty line was successfully met by 2015, even if the rest of the goals were not as successful.

The SDGs could have been improved through a stronger focus on the mitigation of inequality of incomes, gender, and regions damaging to both advanced and developing countries. All other goals should have been selected on the basis of their complementarity and contribution towards meeting this overarching theme. By 2030, the world might be a better place if eradication of poverty and mitigation of inequality were the main focus.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1288826>

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November 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 28 TH TO DECEMBER 4TH 2016

INCLUSIVE SDGS

Dawn December 4th, 2016

Reem Khurshid

DECEMBER 3, 2016, marked the UN International Day of People with Disabilities. This year, its theme is ‘achieving 17 goals for the future we want’. As the world’s largest and most inclusive minority group — all ages, genders, ethnicities, religions and socio-economic levels are represented; and anyone can join this group at any time — people with disabilities must be included as key stakeholders in the process of achieving the 17 SDGs.

Part of the problem for disability inclusion in Pakistan is cultural, a tendency to view disability through the lens of sympathy and charity. Disability is thus seen as a burden that society must (benevolently or begrudgingly) carry rather than as a natural process, which may begin at birth but is just as likely to occur during one’s lifetime through injury, illness or old age.

Understanding disability as existing on the same spectrum of variable ‘normative’ function as the able-bodied population, and ranging from mild to severe, allows us to recognise our commonalities rather than dividing the

population through this binary. Seeing this as a human rights (instead of charitable) concern, then, allows for more inclusive development.

While disability represents the functional consequences of a physical, sensory or cognitive impairment, it does not represent ‘handicap’ — the social and environmental consequences, or barriers, people with disabilities encounter. Thus, part of the problem in Pakistan is also structural — both environmental and institutional. Our urban infrastructure is inadequately designed, barely accessible for parents with young children, let alone for people with disabilities.

Nor are our institutions, with their inflexible procedures and practices, accessible to them. While disability rights groups have taken tremendous strides to have their demands for public accessibility met, these interventions are still piecemeal and poorly implemented — leaving large parts of the experience of navigating public spaces with a disability out of the equation.

Disability must be factored into development decisions.

The most insidious part of the problem is psychological. Isolated from society, people with disabilities are more likely to internalise societal misconceptions about them. They, especially women, are more likely to face social and economic discrimination, and physical and sexual violence. Their global literacy rate is as low as 3pc (1pc for women), and workforce participation is similarly low. These factors contribute to a vicious cycle of exclusion.

When the state does address disability, such as through special education, its practices are exclusionary and unsustainable. Given the critical condition of mainstream public education, government-run special education schools are often given short shrift in terms of policy considerations and budgetary allocations. Without access to expensive, private special education schools in select urban centres, many in rural areas are left without access to education.

Running a parallel system strains already limited resources and perpetuates the practice of exclusion from mainstream society — denying children with disabilities the chance to learn to integrate and manage their conditions at an early age, and denying able-bodied or able-minded children the chance to learn tolerance for diversity and community spirit. There is a place for special education, but small, inexpensive interventions (such as physical accessibility and teacher training) and community-developed assistive devices not only bring most students with minor to moderate disabilities into the mainstream education fold, they improve the learning outcomes of all students, as has been evinced in inclusive education systems across the world.

Whether it is to achieve quality education (SDG 4), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) or any other SDG, disability advocates must be at the heart of the development process as key stakeholders. With increasing lifespans and rising global disability rates, we must factor disability into every development decision we make.

For us to come close to achieving the 17 SDGs by 2030, the policies and plans we develop must be based on accurate research and data of population figures.

In Pakistan, actual disability statistics are difficult to come by. A 2012 HHRD report estimates the population of Pakistanis with disabilities to be more than the populations of Hyderabad, Multan and Peshawar combined. This staggering estimate was based on projections using data from the 1998 national census — which experts argue is a lowball figure given that the methodology for data collection was decidedly arcane, and compounded by failures of households to report disability due to societal stigma.

While a ‘model disability survey’ for Attock district was announced in 2015 under a WHO-Baitul Mal collaboration, it is critical that the much-awaited national census be conducted — with a revised methodology, and with census takers who are sensitised — if we are committed to the inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream society.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300322>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 14TH TO NOVEMBER 20TH 2016

‘THE ELITE HAVE ACHIEVED THE SDGS, BUT NOT THE POOR’

Dawn, November 18th, 2016

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: As long as there are class differences in the country, the goals that Pakistan sets for the future will not be achieved by the poor, said renowned economist Dr Qaiser Bengali at a conference on ‘Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – Roadmap for Pakistan’ on Thursday.

The elite of the country have achieved all the SDGs while the poor have not, he said.

Talking about class differences, he said the elite pay three times the monthly salary of the watchmen in their homes as their children's school fees.

"Some children in the country have never tasted an egg because their parents cannot afford to buy eggs. They live in a one-room house when the elite have separate rooms for various purposes including for sitting, eating, sleeping and to watch television," he said.

"I told some people in Swat once that they should drink boiled water, which they said they cannot afford to do because the fuel used for boiling water is costly," he said.

Dr Bengali said the SDGs cannot be achieved unless the state accepts responsibility.

"The state is responsible for providing health and education but of every 100 rupees added to the national income, Rs30 are spent on the elite and Rs3 are spent on the poor," he said.

The wealth tax was abolished in 1977 and not a single housing project for the poor has been launched, he added.

When asked about the Benazir Income Support Programme, he said the initiative cannot reduce poverty and can only support income.

Talking about past development goals, Dr Bengali said that in 1947, a goal was set to achieve a 100pc literacy rate in 25 years and by the deadline, i.e. by 1972, we had lost half the country.

National Commission on the Status of Women Chairperson Khawar Mumtaz also spoke at the conference, which was organised by the Strengthening Participatory Organisation (SPO).

She said the SDGs contain 17 goals and 169 targets, all of which are very important for the country.

"The youth makes up for 60pc of the population, of which half are women. There is a need to address the issue of violence against women and girls as well as gender inequality," she said.

However, she added, things are changing. For instance, more people want to educate their daughters and let them work once they are done with education.

The coordinator of the Parliamentary Committee on SDGs, MNA Uzair Ali Khan said the government is focusing on strengthening institutions and things will continue to improve if democracy continues.

Sindh Deputy Secretary Health Dr Sikander Memon said Sindh's situation has worsened due to political interference and appointments in violation of merit.

"Those who are responsible for vaccinations spend their days in restaurants and submit fake reports in the evening.

The health budget for Sindh is Rs66 billion, which is sufficient for addressing health related issues but due to corruption, this amount is wasted," he said.

Punjab representative Zafar Ikram said just 1pc of the GDP is spent on health in Pakistan when the recommended amount for public health spending is 5pc of the GDP. He said health issues will be addressed if even 3pc of the GDP was spent on health.

Sustainable Development Policy Institute's Dr Shehryar Khan Toru said a health emergency should be imposed in the country because Pakistan has the eighth highest newborn death rate in the world and one of 10 children die before reaching five years of age.

SPO chief executive Naseer Memon said one of the reasons the Millennium Development Goals were not met was the lack of awareness, and added that it was a positive step that people were being informed about the SDGs.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1297057/the-elite-have-achieved-the-sdgs-but-not-the-poor>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 7TH TO NOVEMBER 13TH 2016

UNIDO PLEDGES HELP TO PAKISTAN ON SDGS

Dawn November 9th, 2016

Mubarak Zeb Khan

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (Unido) will continue to promote sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Pakistan, Director General Li Yong told Dawn on Tuesday.

"The guiding principle lies in promoting SDGs, especially in the areas of industry, innovation and infrastructure," he said, adding that Unido will also promote SDGs in other areas.

The organisation has already achieved some milestones since it started working in Pakistan in the 1970s. Mr Li said Unido will continue to focus on targeted areas without losing sight of the need for strengthening small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), creating jobs and combating poverty.

In the early 1970s when Pakistan's leather industry was in its infancy, Unido started building capacity to create conditions for the rational progression of that sector, he said.

As a result, the leather industry is now catering to the needs of domestic consumers besides being one of leading export sectors. Pakistan exports leather products worth approximately \$600 million per annum.

Mr Li said Unido has been actively working in Pakistan to improve the country's industrial development, trade capacity, access to renewable energy and environmental protection.

However, he said it is beyond Unido's mandate to address all economic and social challenges faced by a country like Pakistan. The impact of Unido's interventions is already visible and will be instrumental in boosting job opportunities, reducing poverty and enhancing the country's overall economic growth, he said.

According to Mr Li, Unido helped establish a comprehensive food safety system in the country with the passage of Pakistan Food Safety Bill that was developed by the organisation in cooperation with more than eight ministries.

In the process, Unido helped 40 laboratories get accreditation and more than 120 food inspectors and master trainers gain internationally recognised qualifications.

Setting up the first laboratory of its kind in the region for dioxin testing is another example of Unido's work in Pakistan, he said. It also facilitated the resumption of fish exports to the European Union (EU) after a seven-year ban. Citing another example, he said mango farmers of Multan have now received sufficient training so they can export their products directly to high-end markets, such as Walmart in the United Kingdom.

Similarly, the certification of CE Marking was a gateway to access the EU market for various industrial products, like surgical instruments, electric fans and cutlery, which will boost exports, he added.

Unido has been supporting the Pakistani youth who have innovative ideas, especially in clean technology. It has been enabling them to compete in global arenas like Silicon Valley, he said.

In the 1980s, Unido started addressing Pakistan's environmental issues by establishing the first combined effluent treatment plant at Kasur in Punjab. The plant helped minimise pollution generated by tanneries that were dumping production waste in adjoining waterways.

Mr Li also mentioned some of his ideas that were tested successfully: creating a hybrid technology to power bicycles by using the energy generated and stored while pedalling in addition to building a gasifier that runs on agricultural waste and is mounted on the tractor that it drives.

He said these are just a few of Unido's innovations, which have been developed up to international standards.

These endeavours have recently been acknowledged at the government level, a move that can pave the way for thousands of other innovations to grow into viable and successful businesses, he said.

Unido has also given a lot of emphasis to gender mainstreaming, Mr Li noted. He said Unido's portfolio is diverse and dynamic in multiple areas. These achievements depict the inclusive and sustainable industrial development spirit and are very much in line with the government's so-called Vision-2025 for Pakistan, he added.

December 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 19 TH TO DECEMBER 25TH 2016 INTEGRATING SDGS IN BUSINESS MODEL

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, December 19th, 2016

Afshan Subohi

Pakistan's track record on inclusive development has not been enviable. However, the endorsement of the Sustainable Development Goals by the private sector has rekindled hope of extended ownership and better performance.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embody the current global social contract and ends in 2030. It was launched at the UN annual meeting in Washington in 2015, the final year for the 'Millennium Development Goals'.

Pakistan struggled with the MDGs. While there was some progress all eight goals were missed, some by a wide margin. The performance was poor despite a detailed strategy paper, complete with yearly benchmarks in place.

The country underperformed on the MDGs under both military and civilian rule as the progress was tardy throughout the 15 year period.

Experts, supported by United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), maintained that the lack of public awareness — which could have pressurised the government to deliver on its MDG commitments — and the limited participation of the private sector in the transformational endeavour were two key reasons for the underperformance.

The situation appears slightly different this time around. Prime Minister Nawaz's government moved swiftly to broaden the ownership of the SDGs by getting them endorsed unanimously by the National Assembly as early as February 2016. This committed all political parties to the development agenda 2030.

Subsequently, parliamentary task forces at both tiers (federal and provincial) were constituted to initiate the process for legislation if and when required. The federal government also created an SDG secretariat to coordinate and monitor progress.

According to information gathered from multiple official and business sources including stakeholders; the private sector, civil rights organisations, NGOs, think tanks, academia and development partners have been invited multiple times to discuss and debate national and provincial plans for better results.

At the press conference for the launch of the SDGs, companies such as Unilever Pakistan and Standard Chartered Bank participated as co-sponsors. Both the bank and the company said their principals have woven the SDG sustainability agenda into their business model.

Explaining their position, Hussain Ali Talib, senior manager corporate affairs at Unilever said: "It means that our business model is now driven by purpose-driven products that embody sustainability as a key performance indicator. We aim to do well in business by doing good for the community.

"We moved away from CSR (corporate social responsibility) towards a more holistic approach", he said mentioning the Unilever livelihood project 'Guddi Baji' over the phone. For the project the company trained village women and invested in establishing home based beauty parlours that used Unilever beauty products.

"It empowered women by equipping them with skills, establishing a business in their premises while expanding the reach of our brand", he said. He also referred to ice cream selling trikes in this regard.

The company claimed in the material mailed to Dawn: "Unilever has reduced the environmental impact of its operations, cutting CO2 emissions by 33pc; water by 34pc; and has also become a zero-waste-to-landfill organisation".

In May 2016 Unilever partnered with Google, Standard Chartered Bank, Plan International and some European missions in Pakistan for a round table conference focused on taking collaborative action to increase the impact of various development projects initiated by the participants.

An SCB executive informed that the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) had announced its support of the SDGs and that effort was afoot to get endorsements from local business forums.

"There are at least 50 firms and social organisations in our network, including some telcoms like Telenor, ready to cooperate and collaborate to achieve the SDGs in Pakistan.

Planning Commission (PC) insiders told Dawn that a separate SDG cell is being set up. "The real work: taking stock of the current status with comparable data in each of the 17 goal areas and setting realistic targets and annual benchmarks to monitor progress, has yet to start for which funds will be provided by the UNDP" an economist at the PC said.

According to information provided by the UNDP the federal and provincial governments have already committed \$15.5m as co-financing to set up SDG Support Units, which will coordinate activities at two tiers.

The UN agency would match the amount from its sources. It will be used for: (1) mainstreaming the SDGs policy and plans; (2) data and reporting; (3) inclusive budgeting process and tracking expenditure; (4) innovation.

Experts believe a demanding issue would, however, be to develop a model for private companies committed to achieving the SDGs and their terms of engagement with the public sector.

There is a need to develop and achieve scales in new patterns of sustainable production. The effort will involve a short term cost for long term development. It would be important to forge partnerships with donors and financial institutions to close the resource gap.

All this will require increased effort to achieve innovation in technology and business models.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1303073>

'TOP PRIORITY ACCORDED TO SOCIAL SECTOR, SDGS'

Business Recorder, 20 December 2016

LAHORE: The Punjab government is according top priority to social sector and achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Secretary Planning & Development Department, Punjab, Iftikhar Ali Sahoo, said.

While inaugurating SDGs prioritization workshop jointly organized by P&D Punjab and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) here Monday, Sahoo said that solid steps have been taken to achieve the SDGs. He said the Punjab Growth Strategy was anchored in the sustainable goals with special focus on health, education, job creation through skill development, poverty reduction and energy sector.

According to him, Punjab was attaching high priority to the social sector and during the current financial year, there has been 32% increase in social sector allocations.

He said all the SDGs were important for the government; however, some goals were to be prioritized for early attainment for which the workshop had been organized.

Dr. Hassan Mohtashami, Representative UNFPA said on the occasion that Pakistan will have to control alarming rate of population growth failing which all the efforts for development will go waste.

During the workshop, the representatives of development organizations, CSOs, academia, private sector, local government and government departments gave their suggestions for development priorities in the Punjab province. Sources said the Punjab government believes that equitable economic growth can only be achieved by diverting maximum resources to social sector including education and health, production sector comprising agriculture, livestock etc.

In order to bring qualitative change in the lives of its citizens, the sources said the Punjab government has accorded top priority to social sector in the budget of 2016-17. For education sector, an allocation of Rs. 312.8 billion has been made.

For health sector, an amount of Rs 207.3 billion has been allocated. In addition, the government has also initiated a comprehensive project of clean drinking water with an allocation of Rs. 30.0 billion for the next financial year.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/12/20/8-page/830193-news.html>