The two events, SDPI's Eighteenth Sustainable Development Conference (SDC); and, Eighth South Asia Economic Summit (SAES), were held from 7 – 10 December 2015 at the Marriott Hotel, Islamabad. The mega events hosted a total of 225 panellists of which 152 were from Pakistan and 73 from 16 other countries. Panellists came from Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Canada, Germany, India, Italy, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, UK and the USA.

The Eighteenth SDC titled “Securing Peace and Prosperity” was a thinkers’ agenda, a gathering of regional think tanks working closely with policy makers of their respective countries and representatives of existing and potential SAARC member countries; a congregation of visionaries in Islamabad. SDPI’s Eighteenth SDC focused on understanding regional integration and the attempt of SAARC countries at various forums recently to establish new corridors to achieve sustainable development in the region and beyond.

The Eighth South Asia Economic Summit (SAES), the premier regional platform for debate and analysis of politico-socio-economic issues and problems facing South Asia, brought together stakeholders to review and reflect current issues facing the South Asian countries. The overarching theme of the SAES was “Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Development in South Asia”.

A total of 3,422 audience attended the sessions of the four-day mega events consisting of 4 plenary sessions (SAES’ opening plenary on 7 December 2015; SDC’s opening plenary on 8 December 2015; dinner plenary on 9 December 2015; and, SDC’s closing plenary on 10 December 2015) and 36 concurrent sessions. SAES opening plenary was attended by an audience of 294; SDC's opening plenary by 285; dinner plenary by 546; and, closing plenary by 321. The first day's total audience consisted of 669 persons; second day 747; third day 1200; and, the final day 806.

SDPI was host to a number of prominent personalities during the Eighteenth SDC and Eighth SAES. Among
The event also provided a forum for launching of publications including the following:

1. **SDC Anthology: Pathways to Sustainable Development**
2. **SDPI’s Annual Report 2014-2015**
3. **SAES Anthology: Making Growth Inclusive, Just and Sustainable in South Asia**
4. **Special Issue of South Asia Economic Journal (SAEJ)**
5. **Towards Regional Integration in South Asia: Promoting Trade Facilitation and Connectivity**
6. **Assessment of Mercury Amalgam Use at Private Dental Clinics in Selected Main Cities of Pakistan**
7. **Mahbubul Haq Center’s Human Development in South Asia 2015: The Economy and the People Towards South Asia Economic Union**

The event got widely disseminated by means of SDPI’s SDTV, through the mainstream media channels and got reported in the main newspapers. Some 54 news items were published covering the two mega events. Students were also engaged as ushers to guide the guests at the occasion. To cover the 40 sessions of the mega events, 45 rapporteurs were engaged from them in this special SDC and SAES Bulletin.

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**Research & News Bulletin**

Others, some of them are listed below:

- **Mr. Ahsan Iqbal:** Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms, Government of Pakistan
- **Mr. Ishaq Dar:** Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue, Economic Affairs, Statistics and Privatisation, Government of Pakistan
- **Mr. Imran Khan:** Chairman, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and Member National Assembly
- **Mr. Asad Umar:** Member National Assembly
- **Syed Naveed Qamar:** Chair, National Assembly Standing Committee on Railways, Pakistan
- **Ambassador Halil Ibrahim Akça:** Secretary General, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Tehran, Iran
- **H.E. Dr. TCA Raghavan:** High Commissioner of India to Pakistan
- **H.E. Mr. Bharat Raj Paudyal:** Ambassador of Nepal to Pakistan
- **Mr. Rajan Bhattarai:** Member of Constituent Assembly and Legislative Parliament, Government of Nepal
- **Mr. Nazir Kabiri:** Advisor, Ministry of Finance, Afghanistan
- **Senator Shibli Faraz:** Chairperson Senate Standing Committee on Commerce, Government of Pakistan
- **Mr. Miftah Ismail:** Chairman, Board of Investment, Government of Pakistan
- **Mr. Anjum Assad Amin:** Additional Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Pakistan
- **Mr. Shamsul Mulk:** Former Chairperson, WAPDA
- **Ms Khawar Mumtaz:** Chairperson, National Commission on the Status of Women in Pakistan
SAES Opening Plenary:
Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Development in South Asia

Welcome Address: Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Introduction: Dr. Vaqar Ahmed, Deputy Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Remarks by the Chief Guest: Mr. Miftah Ismail, Chairman, Board of Investment, Pakistan

Inaugural Remarks: Dr. Rajan Bhattarai, Member, Constituent Assembly and Legislative Parliament, Government of Nepal, and Mr. Suraj Vaidya, President-In-Charge SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Nepal

Launch of Publications
1. Making Growth Inclusive, Just and Sustainable in South Asia
2. Towards South Asia Economic Union
3. Special Issue of South Asia Economic Journal (SAEJ)
4. Towards Regional Integration in South Asia: Promoting Trade Facilitation and Connectivity

Plenary Title: 10 Years of SAFTA and Way Forward

Moderator: Mr. Shakeel Ahmed Ramay, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Chair: Mr. M. Syeduzzaman, Former Finance Minister, Bangladesh

Speakers:
- Mr. Saman Kelegama, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Sri Lanka
- Mr. Martin Rama, Chief Economist, South Asia Region, The World Bank, India Office
- Mr. Sonam Tashi, Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Bhutan
- Mr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, Economic Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Bangkok, Thailand

Report by: Mr. Malik Haroon, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan

Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, opened the session by expressing his gratitude to the honourable guests at the opening plenary of the Eighth South Asian Economic Summit (SAES) on 7 December 2015 and extended a warm welcome to all the participants from Pakistan as well as from South Asia and other parts of the world.

Dr. Suleri said that both the mega events, i.e. the Eighth South Asian Economic Summit and the Eighteenth Sustainable Development Conference, had been combined to focus on the achievements of sustainable development in South Asia. “In these mega conferences, researchers, academicians, scientists, policymakers, legislators, and experts from different fields will come up with evidence-based policy interventions,” explained Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri.

He added that they would share best practices and present workable solutions to the emerging challenges faced by the people of South Asia. Case studies and success stories from
other regions would also be shared. Dr. Suleri stated that this Summit was a perfect representation of South-South and North-South cooperation. Every Summit had achieved a historic status. He emphasized the need for cooperation to ensure the environmental well-being and social justice for the people in South Asia.

Talking further, Dr. Suleri said that the South Asian Economic Summit was one of the most important forums in South Asia to discuss economic development issues. He highlighted the need for an agenda to address common issues of climate change, sharing of natural resources, and resolution of political and social conflicts, fair and equitable spread of education, healthcare, technology and employment.

He stated that the governments and civil society had a major role to play in the future of South Asia. Mega projects like TAPI and CASA were being given the highest priority by the Government of Pakistan.

There was a need for a new South Asia with more peace and stability, he noted. “We need solutions which bring more peace and prosperity. We need to adopt measures which can be implemented in a cooperative manner,” emphasized Dr. Suleri.

Dr. Suleri said that improving governance in the region required political will and leadership. “Political will only come when there is demand from the public, from streets, from the roads and civil society as well. If there is no demand then there is no political will. Ensuring peace and governance in the region requires demands from all stakeholders. If there is no demand then peace and governance would be a distant dream,” he stressed.

Dr. Suleri remarked that the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status was largely misinterpreted by the general public. People were not aware of what was meant by the MFN status. “It does not mean that one country is the most favourite, rather it is a win-win situation for two bilateral countries,” pointed out Dr. Suleri.

Dr. Abid Suleri, expressed concerns over the way in which the SDGs, like the earlier MDGs, ignored intra and inter-state differences. “We must not block our visions and dreams under income levels and we must own Vision 2025 and the SDGs,” he stated.

Dr. Vaqar Ahmed, Deputy Executive Director of SDPI, speaking at the occasion said that this event had been organized keeping in mind the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the on-going COP21 in Paris.

“Since 2008, SAES has been bringing together stakeholders each year to review and reflect current issues and problems of the South Asian countries. The Summit develops new insights and generates ideas on policy measures for the consideration of the region's decision-makers,” he said. “SAES is led by a group of five think-tanks across South Asia that hosts the Summit on a rotational basis in one of the SAARC countries every year. The think-tanks are Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in Bangladesh, Research and..."
Dr. Ahmed stated that the Eighth Summit was planned to be held in Kathmandu as per the rotation schedule. However, due to the devastating earthquake that hit Kathmandu on 25 April 2015, it was decided with mutual consent of all co-host partners to move the location to Islamabad.

He continued by saying, “For SDPI to propose this year's theme, i.e., 'Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Development in South Asia' was not very difficult given the signing of SDGs this year in New York and COP21 meeting in Paris. This year had been a year of nations making strong promises towards putting sustainable development at the centre of national and regional economic policies. It was against this background that it also made sense to dovetail the Eighth South Asia Economic Summit with SDPI's annual flagship event, i.e. the Eighteenth Sustainable Development Conference.”

He commented, “Another politically correct reason for holding the Summit in Pakistan is the country's responsibility towards hosting two major track-I meetings. First is the Heart of Asia meeting starting tomorrow, which Pakistan is co-hosting with Afghanistan in Islamabad. Second, Pakistan will also be the host of heads of state meeting of SAARC leaders in 2016. It is also important to mention that SAFTA ministerial meeting is due to be held in March. Our opening plenary will deliberate on some of the important elements that can be part of the SAFTA ministerial meeting.”

“This year's South Asia Economic Summit will also be a reminder for the relevant government departments to act on promises made in the previous SAARC Summit and to complete the agenda left incomplete in the Kathmandu Summit,” he added. While giving out the objectives of the two mega events he said, “Our key objectives for deliberation during the next four days will include: identifying opportunities and challenges for deepening regional integration with an equal focus on inclusive economic growth, broad-based social development, environmental protection and respect for natural resources; to discuss roles of, among others, public sector, the private sector and regional/multilateral organizations for broadening and deepening cooperation for sustainable development; and, to bring the SAARC thought leaders under one umbrella to serve the official SAARC Summit process.” Further stressing on the significance of the Eighth SAES he said, “A key output of this Summit is the policy recommendation statement which we will circulate in the first week of January. Through proper channel, it will be communicated to the relevant Ministries.”

Dr. Ahmed concluded his address by welcoming the participants: “With this, I join Dr. Suleri in welcoming you to Islamabad and hope that your stay will be comfortable and productive.”

The inaugural remarks were given by Dr. Rajan Bhattarai, Member, Constituent Assembly and Legislative Parliament, Government of Nepal. He highlighted the role of the economy in terms of sustainable development and enhanced cooperation in the South Asian context.

Mr. Suraj Vaidya, President-In-Charge SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Nepal, stressed the need for the removal of trade barriers for meaningful progress in the region. He noted that the plenary session of the Summit focused on the South Asian Free Trade Agreement and its future.

The Chairman Board of Investment Pakistan, Mr. Miftah Ismail, was the Chief Guest at the occasion. He stated that governments and civil society had a major role to play in the future of South Asia. He said that mega projects like Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) and Central Asia and South Asia (CASA) were being given the highest priority by the Government of Pakistan. “There are no two opinions about the fact that our economic prosperity and security is closely linked to South Asia,” he emphasized. He also added that the role of the economy in terms of sustainable development and enhanced cooperation in South Asian context could never be ignored.
Speaking during the session, Dr. Saman Kelegama, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Sri Lanka, after expressing his compliments to SDPI, emphasized the lack of regional trade as an impediment to future cooperation. He stated that South Asian Free Trade Agreement would become operational until 2020.

Mr. Martin Rama, Chief Economist, The World Bank, South Asian Region, observed that South Asia can build upon the past successes such as the Indus Waters Treaty as well as common culture to overcome trust deficit in the region.

Mr. Sonam Tashi, Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Bhutan, said that the SAARC region’s competitive advantage needed to be utilized for the benefit of the people of the region. He stressed on the need to reduce duties in SAFTA to zero and liberalization of services and investment in order for economic integration of South Asia. He opined that there was an immense need to sort out trade issues prior to tackling political issues. The need to understand inter-generational harmony and equity could never be ignored in this regard, he stated.

Mr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, Economic Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Bangkok, Thailand, also emphasized the need to reduce duties in SAFTA to zero and liberalization of services and investment to achieve economic integration in South Asia. He said, “The question is, has SAFTA provided meaningful market access to its members? The answer is no.” He pointed out that trade could bring prosperity, but trade could not bring peace if there was no happiness. “In order to go for regional harmonization, we need to standardize the NTBs,” he added.

Mr. M. Syeduzzaman, Former Finance Minister, Bangladesh, concluded the session by reafﬁrming the thoughts offered by other speakers in terms of the need for further cooperation and trust development amongst the SAARC nations.

At the conclusion of the opening plenary, the following publications were launched and presented to the chief guest and the speakers:

- Making Growth Inclusive, Just and Sustainable in South Asia
- Towards South Asia Economic Union
- Special Issue of South Asia Economic Journal (SAEJ)
- Towards Regional Integration in South Asia: Promoting Trade Facilitation and Connectivity

Mr. Haroon Sharif from the World Bank, Islamabad, highlighted the potential beneﬁts of regional corridors. He said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) offered a fantastic opportunity to raise the volume of foreign investment in Pakistan. Mr. Sharif said that one of the challenges was the lower attraction for foreign investors in Pakistan. China grew in the world through 78% exports funded by technology and finance from international investors; India was reaching at 10% but Pakistan stood at around 1%. He emphasised on the requirement to raise the physical investment to convert this infrastructure into a corridor.

Speaking about the electricity transmission and trade project for Central Asia and South Asia (CASA-1000), he said that it was in the advanced stage of its delivery. It was the easiest strategic and much needed emerging regional electricity market, which might open up the doors for activity in terms of economic integration and there was a need to speed it up.

Mr. Sharif continued that governments must setup both strategic and economic forums. He said that project forums like Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) were available but we did not have dialogue forums at the higher level, which could address the economic benefits thus
highlighting the need to invest in the regional economic institutions.

He concluded by saying that investment to fill the knowledge gap was also required. He emphasized that bringing managerial expertise along with the private sector was an investor’s need to be systematically incentivized and mobilised.

Dr. Nagesh Kumar from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for and the Pacific (UNESCAP), India, also stressed on the global and regional economic integration to boost regional development. He said that the criticality of regional economic integration had now been highly recognised considering the fact that the growth rate of world trade that used to be 10% before the onset of the global financial crises had decreased to just 2% which was not enough to sustain the dynamism of the Asian economies.

While sharing his experience, Dr. Kumar explained that there was a huge potential of intra-regional trade and investments but particularly in South Asia this potential largely remains unexploited. It was hampered by the poor regional transport connectivity. That was why cost of trade within South Asia was higher than trade with distant regions like trade between South Asia and United States of America or South Asia and Europe. He continued that as a result, we had very low intra-regional trade along with the lost benefits of geographical proximity, and “Regional transport corridors would help to improve poorly developed transport connectivity and then enhance trade and regional development,” he stressed.

Dr. Kumar was of the view that this transport connectivity needed to be looked in an extended manner; bilateral transport routes were not optimal, perhaps sometimes they became unviable commercially, “therefore, another potential outcome of these corridors would be to maximize the network externalities -- networking in any mode of communication such as telecommunication, transport, etc.,” he stressed.

He said that in order to connect regionally, ESCAP had come up with two models. One was the Asian Highway Route Map concept, and the other the Trans-Asian Railway Route Map. Both of these were backed by international agreements, which were negotiated within the fieldwork of ESCAP and now were internationally agreed.

He continued that the three corridors that would link this region were Northern Corridor, Middle and Southern Corridors. Northern Corridors linked the part of Western Europe and became operational some years ago. Middle Corridors linked China with Western Europe while the South Asian connectivity was linked by the Southern Corridor that needed to be improved. He suggested implementing together all the existing proposals and programmes that were working on it to accomplish the target of regional connectivity.

CASA-1000, CPEC, BBIN (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal; a sub-regional agreement signed last year), INSTC (International North-South Transport Corridor) and BCIM (Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar) were some examples of the existing programmes that need to be coordinated.

He said that some initiatives were required to translate the transport corridors into development corridors. Dr. Kumar said that we needed to invest in facilitation aspects and institutional mechanism to compliment the infrastructure and agreements to allow transit trade. Secondly, these transport corridors must be supportive of the developing industrial clusters around them.

He concluded his speech by saying that the creation of special economic zones around the transport corridors was suggested by him that would be helpful in creating balance development across the whole region.
Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms, Pakistan, chair of the session said that other regions were showing signs of prosperity, growth and better citizens' life by harnessing the benefits of regional connectivity unlike the South Asia that was one of the least connected regions.

He said that South Asia faced trust deficit that limited regional connectivity. The supportive political environment would help eradicate this problem and the existing political manifesto of Pakistan was committed to create that kind of environment in the region, he explained. Moreover, he talked about the initiatives by the Government of Pakistan to promote the environment of peace, understanding and cooperation in South Asia.

Minister Iqbal further enlightened on different levels of regional connectivity that need to be followed. He said that firstly, mobility of people is the necessary condition for this connectivity. For this, liberal visa regime could be considered. An environment of political commitment on part of all countries is required to remove all the barriers on people-to-people logistics, in this region. He said that secondly, trade transactions or trade facilitation also requires element of trust. The mistrust and lack of confidence is a hindrance in eradicating the non-tariff barriers that will hamper trade and trade facilitation.

Minister Ahsan Iqbal said that China-Pakistan Corridor is a flagship project of regional connectivity. CAREC is another example of a framework working on integration with Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics through building roads. To enhance this integration government is also working on Peshawar-Kabul Motorway and CASA pipeline.

He highlighted that Pakistan was located in the heart of three growth engines in Asia: South Asia, China and Central Asia. Pakistan had great opportunity to connect these three engines of growth to create a larger regional framework for economic cooperation and development.

Explaining the potential of CPEC, the Minister said that this project could be called a North-South backbone with East-West connections. It would facilitate other Asian countries to do trade through this corridor. He said that we hoped to upgrade our competitiveness in transport network, so we were aiming to reduce the cost of transportation.

He talked about the upgradation and development of Gwadar Port and infrastructure project for connectivity between Pakistan and China through three passages: the western passage, central and eastern passage, which would connect Khunjerab and Gwadar. He said that in future, it was hoped that we would have industrial and economic zones along these passages, based on comparative advantage that different areas have. We would have the opportunity to relocate Chinese industries, where wages and cost of labour had gone up and they were looking to relocate these industries in countries where cost of labour was less. He concluded by saying, “CPEC offers good opportunity for them to relocate industries in this region and help Pakistan to become a service and industrial hub for the region.”

Ambassador Halil İbrahim Akça, Secretary General, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Tehran, Iran, explained how the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was initiated with three member countries: Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. Afterwards, this number reached up to 10 member countries, including Afghanistan. Trade, transportation and energy were in the priority list of ECO. He informed the audience about some major transportation projects, such as Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Railway, Istanbul-Almaty and Bandar Abbas-Almaty projects. He said that the main purpose was to connect the member states from East to West and North to South, through the railways and motorways.
Ambassador Akça said that some challenges faced were beyond the physical connectivity. He said that each member state had different regulations about the border crossing, about visa, about certificates of goods and services and finally the difference in technical standards. He highlighted that there was a problem to connect the rail roads as railway in each country had different standards of rail tracks.

He further said that trade facilitation was required as the standard operating protocols need to be developed along with the provision of roads. The coordination between the various sites along the corridor was crucial to reap the benefits. The strong coordination, standard operating protocols and addressing the security issues would be the next step to make these corridors operational.

Dr. Sachin Chaturvedi from India said that the regional integration at the level of SAARC had not gone the way as desired. New projects were being started, but the main issue was dealing with it rightly. He said that extensive connection between trade and development needed to be developed, in terms of creating jobs and in terms of providing stimulus to the manufacturing sector and also to other economic activities.

Dr. Chaturvedi said that there was also a need to address the issue of investment deficit and security perceptions. He said that there were ways to tackle it, but political leadership was an important element that could play a significant role in this regard.

Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairperson Board of Governors, SDPI, concluded the session by saying that there was a consensus on the way forward and there was a need to focus on transformational projects and programmes such as CASA-1000, CPEC, and other regional connectivity projects.

He said that South Asia had the potential to contribute to the global transformation. Unfortunately, potential of economic cooperation and regional integration in South Asia was unexploited. The major challenge was trust deficit that must be addressed to maximize the potential utilization of these corridors. These corridors were the key to promote the regional development. He concluded by emphasizing on investment in promotion of knowledge and signing of trade and fiscal treaties among countries of South Asia.
Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik started the session by giving a brief introduction of SAARC Trade Promotion Network (TPN). He said that the objective of the TPN is to promote intra-regional trade by creating strong linkages among network members. He further added that in 2009 the SAARC trade website was launched by the network. He also said that there are inefficiencies in port infrastructure of SAARC countries, such as Jawaharlal Nehru port, as compared to ports in Singapore, which is an obstacle towards integration in the region. He stressed that poor management and bureaucratic hurdles at customs are a huge hindrance in this network between South Asian countries and that South Asian institutions are weak in business environment, labour laws and conflict management. He added that South Asia has the most restrictive set of labour regulations in the world, and the region also suffers from a high degree of conflict both within and across countries. He suggested that South Asia has to connect within itself and reduce its intra-regional trade costs, which are 85% higher than those in East Asia. Internal connectivity should be improved so that trucks travel freely between countries using economical routes. He, however, was also positive and said that despite all the restrictions, trade is taking place. He ended up his address by saying that the private sector should be brought in to play a more active role and tourism should be promoted which will increase people-to-people contact.

Ms Nisha Taneja said that constraints continue to impede the full realization of benefits of SAFTA and South Asia is way behind in trade. She further said that Pakistan needs to complete the process of granting MFN status to India, especially regarding the tariff. She also said that trade balance continues to bother the smaller countries in the region like Bangladesh. She highlighted that non-tariff barriers, such as problems at land borders are larger than sea ports. Regulatory regimes of the countries are to be blamed for these problems, she said. On a positive note she stated that India and Pakistan are the only two countries in South Asia which are members of International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC). On the importance of trade she stated that the Agartala region in India imports fish from Bangladesh, and is benefiting from the trade significantly. She discussed various developments between the SAARC countries such as the signing of the Motor Vehicles Agreement between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India
and Nepal. She suggested that the pace of reforms in all countries should be quickened and behind the border measures and regulatory reforms are very important in acting as a cornerstone to all agreements.

Ms Subhashini Abeysinghe started her speech by saying that there is a bankruptcy of leadership in South Asia. Regarding her own country she said that Sri Lanka has disintegrated not only from SAARC, but from the rest of the world as well. She suggested letting the governments do what they want to do, but also look at parallel structures and let them perform trade with each other. Connectivity and potential are required for trade between countries, she further added. She stated that Sri Lanka's highest potential market is the Indian market and the business community in Sri Lanka do not see the potential in Pakistan as they do in India. She said that due to the huge problem of information in South Asia, the private sector does not know about the potential out there, especially small firms which have problems funding research. At the end she said that we have to be pragmatic contrary to idealist statements made by SAARC members during SAARC summits and that India is the future growth partner for Sri Lanka even if no one likes it.

Mr. Shafquat Haider began by saying that introspection and admission regarding the region's history is important in order to move forward. He explained that under the British regime South Asia was a vibrant economic powerhouse but the partition in 1947 resulted in the economic down-sizing of the region. He further added that the independence of Bangladesh was costly in terms of life, property and economy. Regarding trade he said that the factors affecting it are transportation, shipping and consumer preferences and that these factors need to be examined for deciding on a strategy for regional economic integration. He ended up by saying that the public bureaucracy needs to speed up the implementation of the agreements between various SAARC countries.

Mr. Rajan Bhattarai said that bilateral trade between the US and China is vibrant despite differences between them and that in South Asia, India-China also have disputes, but still they have come together on bilateral trade, which was almost $75 billion between them in 2014. He stated that trade should not be linked with political issues and differences and we have to overcome these differences by debating on them and initiating the reconciliation process. He highlighted the importance of India in the region because it borders majority of the South Asian countries, therefore, it has to take an active part in trade in this region. In the end he said that dialogue and interaction between countries is important to reduce tension between them.

Ms Shaista Pervaiz Malik said that there is a huge potential in the South Asian region and it needs to be unlocked. She also said that security and mistrust are the foremost factors affecting trade in the region. Regarding women she said that they need to be more inclusive and more facilities and trainings should be provided to them. She further stated that the key players in the region are India and Pakistan as they have a lot of barriers and problems between them and if these barriers are not broken, this region will be left behind and the full potential will not be utilized. She said that the empowerment of women in the region should be the first priority of all the countries of South Asia and more financial assistance and security should be provided to them.

Mr. Suraj Vaidya said that weak infrastructure is a hindrance to trade in South Asia, e.g. bad roads. He said that the reality is that everyone wants to protect their local industry despite the rhetoric on free trade. He also said that the policies are unstable in this region and our vision needs to be clear. He further added that the more restriction we have, the more we create a parallel grey market economy. He also said that the Home Ministry needs to relax its regulations, which in the name of security prevents business and trade to move forward. Hence there needs to be meetings of heads of the Home Ministries of the countries rather than their heads of states to solve the security issue between countries. He stressed that unanimous decision-making is very difficult among SAARC countries due to conflicting demands and interests. He said that more professional people should be brought in to run government institutions and the bottom line is getting investment across the borders and for that the private sector must be given leverage to take the lead.

The following policy recommendations were offered in the session:

- Improve internal connectivity (infrastructure) so that trucks travel freely between countries using economical routes.
- Bring the private sector to play a more active role in trade.
- Promote tourism which will increase people-to-people contact in South Asia.
Hasten the pace of economic reforms in all South Asian countries.

A pragmatic approach should be adopted, instead of idealist statements made by SAARC members during SAARC summits.

Political history of the region must be considered before deciding a strategy on economic integration.

Empowerment of women in the region should be the first priority for economic integration.

Trade should not be linked with political issues and differences.

Dialogue and interaction between countries should be encouraged to reduce tension between the countries in South Asia.

The home ministries in all the SAARC countries need to relax their regulations to facilitate trade.

More professional people should be there to run government institutions rather than bureaucrats.

Private sector must be given the lead in trade with minimum government interventions to secure efficient trade.

Session A-3:
Leadership for Sustainable Development: Role of Private Sector

Moderator: Mr. Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General, SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Islamabad, Pakistan

Panel Organiser: Ms Anam Khan, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Speakers:
Mr. Adil Khattak, CEO, Attock Refinery, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
Engr. M.A. Jabbar, CEO Qaim Filters, Karachi, Pakistan
Mr. Majyd Aziz, Former Chairman, Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Karachi, Pakistan
Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Vice President, SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Islamabad, Pakistan

Report by: Mr. Yasir Dil, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Mr. Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General, SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Islamabad, Pakistan, said that compared to other regional blocks, South Asia with lags behind not only in MDGs but also SDGs. For inclusive growth, achieving those goals is necessary, he emphasized. Looking at the human resource development index, all of the South Asian countries, except Maldives and Sri Lanka, were not able to sustain their position in the top 100 countries, he said. It is the right time to raise the question whether leadership is in the wrong hands, what type of the role private sector should play, and to look towards a prosperous Asia, he stressed.

Engr. M.A. Jabbar, CEO Qaim Filters, Karachi, Pakistan, talked about the way forward to SAFTA. He discussed the role of leadership and how it can encourage motivation. Further, he discussed the opportunities arising from CPEC; the role of Chamber of Commerce at the regional level; and,
the role of SAARC in creating awareness. The goal in South Asia should be to provide basic necessities to 40% of the population, he emphasized.

Mr. Adil Khattak, CEO, Attock Refinery, Pakistan, said, we remain hostage to lack of regional cooperation and that we have much potential to enable a cooperative environment. Three years back, we were very much ready to have trade with India in the field of petroleum but unfortunately the political leadership and security establishment created barriers. It is important to raise the percentage of trade and cooperation in the region, stressed the speaker.

Mr. Majyd Aziz, Former Chairman, Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Karachi, Pakistan, stressed upon a decisive role in regional trade. There is talk about cooperation and harmony but policy makers rarely take decisions, he lamented. Private sector needs to encourage trade relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Private sector should get out of the bureaucratic setup and take up holistic approach.

Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Vice President, SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Islamabad, Pakistan, lamented that the process of trade is very slow. It needs people-to-people interaction via private sector. Private sector including multinational companies need to fill the vacuum in Pakistan and South Asian market. He also proposed building accessible vocational training centres where leadership should volunteer themselves.

Session A-4:
Regional Cooperation for Energy Security

Panel Organiser / Moderator: Dr. Shehryar Khan, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
Speakers:
Mr. Alias Wardak, Managing Director, New Beginning Network, Afghanistan Branch
Mr. Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International, India
Mr. Shoaib Ahmed, Deputy Director, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Energy Centre, Pakistan
Engr. Arshad S. Abbasi, Senior Advisor, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
Ms Selina Irfan, Coordinator-Energy and Low-Carbon Initiatives Programme Development Department, LEAD Pakistan, Islamabad, Pakistan
Report by: Mr. Mohsin Ali Kazmi and Mr. Irfan Ahmad Chatha, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan

The panellists underscored the need for securing regional peace and security; developing facilitative state attitudes; and brooding of an amiable weltanschauung [worldview] amongst Track II diplomats before undertaking regional or bilateral energy related project in South Asian region.

Mr. Alias Wardak, Managing Director, New Beginning Network, Afghanistan Branch, highlighted the need for adopting a project driven approach on regional level rather than just towing a study driven approach. Mr. Wardak stated that enough of academic studies had been conducted, but it was now time for undertaking new energy projects under the framework of public-private partnerships with private sector taking the lead role. He said that the most important pre-requisite for this initiative was to secure regional peace and security and, which was the only way
forward. He maintained that peace and security would reduce trust deficit among regional players of South Asia and trust building would in turn provide the necessary impetus to move from study driven approach to project driven approach. Mr. Wardak advised that the first practical step towards energy security cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan could be the construction of a dam on River Kunar.

Engr. Arshad S. Abbasi, Energy, Adviser, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, steered the discussion to the prevalent market imperfections in energy sector at a regional level. He said that the discriminatory pricing regimes were a drawback of bilateral energy agreements. For example, Turkmenistan is charging USD4 per mmbtu (one million British Thermal Units) to Iran and USD6.80 to USD6.90 per mmbtu to China. Contrarily, it had proposed the price of USD11.9 and USD13 per mmbtu to Pakistan and India respectively. Engr. Abbasi called upon to follow the Norwegian model for Pakistan's energy policies because it had 90% share for hydro power in its energy mix despite being abundantly rich in hydrocarbon reserves. He cautioned about the dwindling gas supplies and revealed that the gas shortfall will rise 6,252 mmcfd (Million Cubic Feet per Day) till 2025. Engr. Abbasi emphasised upon enhancing efficiencies of thermal power generation units. He said that globally, the efficiency level of such units ranges from 50% to 60%. Ironically, the most efficient plant (Fauji Kabirwala) of Pakistan has efficiency level of only 40%.

Mr. Shoaib Ahmed, Deputy Director, SAARC Energy Center, revealed that almost all the countries of South Asia were energy deficient. He elaborated that Pakistan faced power shortfalls; Afghanistan faced poor access to electricity; Bangladesh's gas production was declining; Sri Lanka's hydro options had exhausted; India was finding it difficult to balance growth and energy demands; while Nepal had single route dependence. He emphasised on the identification of energy supplies and inter-connections and to treat it as a continuous process. He also proposed that the scope of SAARC Inter-governmental Framework Agreement for Cooperation in Electricity (IGFA) needed to be widened to energy commodities other than electricity.

Ms Selina Irfan, Co-ordinator, LEAD Pakistan, punctuated the need for a South Asian Energy Security Index. She also lamented the tendency of policy formulators towards short-term energy solutions in South Asia. She called for a long-term approach to tackle energy related issues.
The panellists called attention towards easing the soft side – logistic, legal and customs related requirements – for developing effective trade corridors instead of merely building hard infrastructures for bilateral and regional trade.

Senator Naveed Qamar, Chair, National Assembly Standing Committee on Railways, Pakistan, chaired the session. He lamented the lack of push factor in business communities and civil societies of all the South Asian countries to urge their respective governments for eradicating the logistic barriers to cross-border trade. Senator Qamar said that understanding the benefits and importance of regional trade for South Asian populace was not rocket science. He said that unfortunately, the inaction on the part of those at the helm of affairs impeded the translation of policy recommendations of academic studies into practicable trade facilitating frameworks. If Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Myanmar could enter into BBIM Motor Vehicle Agreement then other four countries should also replicate it, he proposed.

Prof. Dr. Mustafizur Rahman, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh, mentioned the failure of translating transport corridors into development corridors. He said that the transport costs for trade between South Asian countries and European countries was higher than the transport costs for trade within the South Asian countries. The reasons for these higher costs were political rather than purely economic ones. “Bangladesh, India, Afghanistan and Bhutan fulfil 30%, 70%, 10% and 15% obligations of their trade facilitation agreements respectively. But the real fruits would be borne only when all of them fulfil 100% obligations,” he said, adding, “For if one country does not fill all of its obligations then instead of synergy, a conflict arises that is destructive for trade.” Prof. Rahman also called for cross border joint ventures between transporters of different countries because the local links of different transporters could be helpful in easing out logistic hurdles.
Mr. Ajith Wattuhewa, President Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Sri Lanka, said, “For sustainable transportation system there is a need to improve the flow of Cross Border Freight (CBF) because 57% of the transportation time is lost at the regional borders while 38% of the transport taxes are implied which are due to unofficial taxes at regional borders.” Mr. Wattuhewa said that there was a need to initiate political dialogues at the regional level to solve the transformational issues. He further added that similarly, “Dedicated system e.g. Inland Clearance Depot (ICD) is required to reduce the transportation time.”

Prof. Dr. Nadia Tahir of Bahria University, Islamabad, expressed her doubt on the possibility of effective transport corridors between the countries who were not even prepared to play cricket matches. She said that India had not allowed Pakistan to access Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan via its territory and Pakistan had not given transit rights to India to access Afghanistan. She maintained that empirical evidence showed that Pakistan, India and Afghanistan were amongst the low performers with regard to ease in cross border trade according to Ease of Doing Business Indicators with 169th, 133rd and 174th rank respectively. Prof. Tahir highlighted the role of banking sector as crucial to facilitative logistics for trade because guaranteed payments were essential for building reliable business partnerships and for this banking channels needed to be improved.

Mr. Joseph George, Consultant at United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), New Delhi, India, proposed for a Regional Cooperation Framework for facilitation of international railway transport, which would envisage promoting and encouraging corridor approach; for facilitation of an international railway transport system (EATL Project Model) and formulating bilateral/sub-regional agreements to standardize cross-border railway operations. According to him, lagging regions and landlocked countries get a boost from improved connectivity with regional and global markets. They engaged in inclusive trade and attain economic growth. Unfortunately, the South Asian region was the least integrated one in the world. Mr. George concluded that in a changed international context where the developed world will be unable to drive the region’s growth, it would be critical to exploit the potential of regional economic integration.

Dr. Prabir De, Fellow, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, India, called for an innovative approach to save resources, regional arrangement for regional transportation with environmental concerns (SAARC Business Travellers Card, Air Services Agreement, and electronic payment system) and regional green fund for sustainable transport and logistics corridors in South Asia. He also emphasised the need for developing SAARC single windows that could gradually lead towards a virtually paperless trade amongst South Asian countries. Dr. De also touched upon the environmental issue linked with more corridors as carbon emissions were estimated to increase with more corridors in those areas, which were now deserted but would face carbon emissions after the corridor construction.

Mr. R.B. Rauniyar, Managing Director, Interstate Multi-Modal Transport, Nepal expressed his concern that in South Asia, lack of a transit transport cooperation was a major bottleneck in regional economic integration. Although land locked developing countries were at loss, coastal countries also suffered a huge cost of non-cooperation. Mr. Rauniyar said that a number of useful initiatives had been made at the regional as well as bilateral level, but they were yet to deliver their promises. He said workable framework agreement should be drafted and include the harmonisation of rules and procedures; mutual recognition of certificates, licenses and policies; effective dispute settlement and risk management systems; special rules for certain products and infrastructural up-gradation, particularly in the least developed countries (LDCs). He concluded by citing the India-Nepal railway link as a prototype for other sub-regional transport corridors. Nepalese exports took place only through Chennai’s port. Those were brought to the port through India-Nepal railway link.
The speakers shared their ideas and experiences about the macroeconomic stability and sustainable growth in South Asia. The speakers and participants exchanged their views and ideas during the session in the form of questions and answers. The session was attended by a wide range of participants from diverse fields including researchers, practitioners, educators, health promoters, social activists and others interested in sustainable development and macroeconomic stability.

Mr. Saqib Sherani gave an overview of the IMF programme in Pakistan and discussed its objectives, reasons of failure and its current status. He elaborated upon the IMF disbursement programme. According to Mr. Sherani, the theme of the IMF programme is sustainable growth but Pakistan's socio-economic performance is declining. Pakistan is receiving IMF aid since 1984 through 12 disbursement programmes. He indicated the reasons for its failure due to political and policy instability, missing reform of constituency in Pakistan due to geopolitical rents, i.e. take money but make no reforms, more focus on stabilization not on structural reform, focus on defence lending instead of reforms. The key target of the programme is the accumulation of foreign exchange reserves and ceiling of fiscal deficits. Mr. Sherani inspected the current status of IMF disbursement programme and discussed the following:

- Severe macroeconomic crisis in 2008 due to terms of trade shock
- Failure of VAT and IMF programme
- Period of analysis and poor economic management
- Extension of three-year US 7.2 million dollar funds

Mr. Sherani concluded his talks by claiming that the IMF programmes are unlikely to trigger sustainable growth because the programme is pro-cyclical in nature and not structural.

Mr. Deepak Nayyar, Former Finance Secretary Government of India, suggested that government has to play its role in reducing the fiscal deficit. The struggling economy has to bear pain of structural adjustments, he added. He stated that economic management drives economic growth during crisis. Economy can be adjusted in two ways: first through...
pricing and second through expenditure approach. He said that government borrowing can be beneficial if it is using it in terms of investment.

Mr. Deepak Nayyar also pointed the mirthless performance of the IMF disbursement programme in perspective of economic theories and policies. He lamented that the programme led by IMF had not worked at all. According to him if an economy is in crisis then it should stabilize and come back to equilibrium, macroeconomic stability is conducive to growth and the word stabilization in economics is to stabilize the economy when it is in crisis, explained the speaker. Stabilisation of economy is a separate phenomenon from growth, he stressed. Concluding his talk, Mr. Nayyar stated that for the success of the programme, we have to rethink about the monetary policy when economy is not in crisis and also see the mandate of Federal Reserve when there is crisis.

He also inspected the malaise performance of IMF disbursement programme and stated that the logic of IMF was in stability of exchange rate. However, for the period of 1980-2000, despite the repeated IMF adjustment programme, 20 countries show severe macroeconomic distortions.

He added that due to exclusion of large part of the population, Pakistan was disabling sustainable growth. He recommended that the Government should initiate a process of institutional change which could open economy to the poor individuals so that they can participate in education, provide adequate physical infrastructure, electricity, remove physical constraints to growth and enhance strategic connectivity between south-north corridors to east-west corridor.

Ms Anjum Asad Ameen, Additional Secretary, Government of Pakistan stated that aid effectiveness is the key to success. She said that it is the government's responsibility to make IMF disbursement programme effective. She said that aid effectiveness has close connections with macroeconomic stability. She also pointed to some of the numerical figures of the IMF aid programme as in 2010 when, 39% of the total IMF aid went to the budget expenditures. Lastly, she recommended that we need to close our development partners for the macroeconomic stability and sustainable growth in South Asia.

Dr. Shahid Ahmed, Professor Jamia Millia, New Delhi, said that economies of South Asia are in disequilibrium due to continuous inflationary pressure. He said that macroeconomic stability is important for the upcoming SDGs in terms of poverty reduction and other socio-economic conditions.

He emphasized on coordination for macroeconomic stability in South Asia. He critically compared the current Indian economic growth status and said that growth rate of India is quite stable for the last 20 years but questioned whether this growth was sustainable or equitable when the inflation rate is deviating to 10-15%? He pointed to the World Bank statistics that shows more than 10% urban unemployment in South Asia. He stated that economy is always in disequilibrium although equilibrium is a benchmark. Although there is fluctuation, South Asia is leading in growth. To achieve high growth, economy should be in disequilibrium. In the long run, equitable, macroeconomic stability and sustainable perspective of growth are important, emphasized the speaker.

Dr. Syed Akmal Hussain, Professor at the Forman Christian College, Lahore, informed the audience that growth rate remained high and quite stable during dictatorship compared to democratic governments. He said that every high growth regime of the Army led government ended in balance of payments crisis. He proposed to engage poor and middle class by giving them access to productive assets, capital markets, high quality education and skills. He suggested that we have to remove physical constraints to growth by providing adequate physical infrastructure such as electricity, gas, transportation and communications.

He discussed the macroeconomic stability condition in Europe and considered that Europe had seen much worse condition than in South Asia in terms of macroeconomic stability. Fiscal deficit is indicator of private sector. He recommended a huge amount of public investment in Europe to overcome the financial stability crisis.

While moderating the session, Dr. Vaqar Ahmed, Deputy Executive Director of SDPI, said that trade and remittances have close links with macroeconomic stability.
Mr. Sanjay Kathuria from the World Bank highlighted the importance of investment which creates employment. He emphasized that the trade-investment nexus is very strong. As investment increases, the trade also increases. He gave the example of ASEAN region where foreign direct investment (FDI) went from USD 60 billion to USD 130 billion and the total export increased from USD 750 to USD 1200 billion between the period of 2006 and 2014.

He said that there is under investment in the South Asian region and trade and investment possibilities also need to be explored further. The intra-regional investment can play a vital role in the development of the South Asian region. But the intra-regional share of FDI is very low at less than 2%.

He highlighted the different paths for increasing the intra-regional investment. The first one to kick start the process in the region can get anchor investment from outside the region. In East Asia, Japan played the role of coordinating investor across the region. China can play the same role in South Asia.

Another way which is mutually complementary, a prime regional investor like Singapore played that role of prime regional investor in ASEAN. Not only Singapore is investing itself in ASEAN but also becoming a conduit for other countries to locate in Singapore and then being a hub for the British, American, Chinese investment from Singapore to ASEAN playing a dual and very important role of regional coordinator of intra-regional investments. India could possibly play that role in South Asia.

He threw light on the importance of ease of doing of business. In this respect he showed the ranking of ease of doing of business of South Asian countries: in this ranking India is at 54, Pakistan at 72, Maldives at 82 and Bangladesh at 89. This ranking is showing that investors have a lot of problems while investing in the South Asian region and that is why investment rate continues to languish here. The domestic and intra-regional investments both need reforms.

Mr. Samir S. Amir from Pakistan said that the Pakistan Business Council (PBC) was a strong proponent of regional integration and supports all initiatives which lead to greater integration of South Asian economies. He presented the background of PBC which is a private sector business policy, advocacy forum which represents the 47 largest businesses of Pakistan. PBC members contribute 23% of Pakistan exports, 16% of tax collection and 10% of Pakistan's GDP. He said that regional integration is important for peace and development in South Asia.
He highlighted the role of PBC in regional integration through the establishments of Pakistan India Joint Business Forum (PIJBF) and Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Business Council (PAJBC). PIJBF is notified by the governments of India and Pakistan and comprises of 30 leading businesspersons from Pakistan and India with its secretariat in Pakistan. The task of both PIJBF and PAJBC is to find out the solutions of issues which impede the trade normalization in South Asia.

The joint taskforce on banking, finance, insurance, capital and markets under the umbrella of PIJBF has identified issues like economic viability, political conditions, regulatory constraints, visas, and lack of knowledge, which are impeding the flow of investment across South Asia. He suggested that multinationals, e.g. auto, pharmaceutical, media, IT, etc., will be the key to resolve the issue by creating joint ventures across the borders.

Dr. Khondaker Golam Moazzem from Bangladesh said that South Asia is well behind other regions in terms of intra-regional trade and intra-regional investment. There is a limited presence of regional production network in South Asia. High trade cost is a major reason for lack of development of region-wide production network. Despite the operation of SAFTA for almost 10 years, intra-regional trade remained at 5% level. Inward FDI has limited contribution to domestic private investment in most of the South Asian countries (1-8% of total private investment).

Inward FDI flow in South Asia is largely destined to India. Pakistan, once a major FDI recipient has lost its importance due to political violence, unrest and lack of infrastructural facilities. It received only USD 1.7 billion in 2014. Bangladesh received only USD 1.5 billion and its share was only 3.9% (vis-à-vis 12.4% in 2000). In fact, FDI flow in South Asia is overwhelmingly getting India-centric. Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India are important players in global apparel sector. Nevertheless investment in this sector was not sufficient within the region. South Asian region must follow the institutional approach and should establish an institute for investment just like SAARC for the integration of regional production networks. Mr. M. Yonass Hossain from Afghanistan emphasized on making easy and harmonizing the process of investment. He said that we should build coherent goals for the whole region without any political purpose.

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There must be opportunities for the countries to move the talent and technology without any hurdle. There are two different kinds of countries in South Asia: landlocked and not landlocked. There is a need to work cooperatively to solve the problems of landlocked countries. He suggested that there should be a joint chamber of commerce among the South Asian countries for the promotion of intra-regional investment. Dr. Miftah Ismail, chair of the session, concluded the session by saying that there are no natural barriers for trade between India and Pakistan but there are only political barriers.

The issue of transport is just a political issue. He said that we do not need to wait for improvement in politics but should follow investment and trade and then look into the improvement of politics. He said that the Government of Pakistan believes in regional cooperation and in this regard the Prime Minister has visited most of the countries of the region. The Government of Pakistan is open to trade with all the SAARC countries in a reciprocal way. He said that Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India (TAPI) gas pipeline project is being started.

He also focused on the student exchange programmes among the South Asian countries because this would be very helpful in regional cooperation. Currently, there is a need that all the SAARC countries should start trade and investing in region, he stressed.
Ms Nasreen Mahmud Kasuri, Founder and Chairperson, Beaconhouse School Systems, Pakistan, talked about the importance of education and said that it also comes under services and trade in South Asia and that it is a great opportunity for students to know their region before they get to know the wider world. She proposed student exchange programme for this purpose. As traditional text books are written in a way to further perpetuate the conflicts rather than resolving them, there should be a joint group of authors for jointly written books about history of regional conflicts as it is very important for the students to know about the regional conflicts and to resolve them with new thoughts and better ideas.

Mr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, Economic Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Bangkok, Thailand, said that SAARC should have given equal emphasis to trade in services and liberalization to goods. He said intra-regional investment flow is not as high as if there would have been agreement on services. He also discussed negative listing in SAFTA; positive listing in SAARC; tariff barriers at the border; and, domestic regulations. The 13th SAARC summit also recognizes the potential of trade in services especially in terms of informal trade, pointed out the speaker.

Ms Subhashini Abeysinghe, Senior Analyst and Head of Economics, Verite’ Research Pvt. Ltd, Sri Lanka, talked about the role of SAARC in regional trade in services; and, preferential liberalization in bilateral regional agreement. She also discussed lack of interest and commitment in services and trade. She said India is a major developing country that has lots of interest in services and trade and is also exporting the services. India has signed several agreements with Malaysia, South Korea and Japan.

Talking about the regulations of services, she said these are very important in order to protect the consumers. The regulations will further increase the interest of service provider. Service liberalization has immensely helped economy in general because service is an input for most of the economic activity in the country. The idea of bringing in other countries importing services from another country is very beneficial. At the end, she said South Asia should liberalize services for regional integration because service liberalization is really good to promote efficiency and productivity of economy.

Dr. Sajid Amin, Research Fellow, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan, said that both trade in services and trade in goods are basically beneficial for the economy but stronger and long run impact comes
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from the trade in services. Health and education are basic ingredients of human capital in the long run. There is huge evidence that trade in services actually results in productivity for long term and growth of the economy, he emphasized.

Countries with trade in education and financial sectors grow faster than those who do not have liberalized financial sectors. The regulatory framework which comes as a barrier to trade in services is at the same time a driver for the trade in services. Services have a huge share in GDP of any country. In Pakistan, trade in services is also a major contributor to growth but it still remains rather negligible. He also talked about centripetal and centrifugal forces.

Labour mobility is the most restricting force in South Asia because the mobility is low in the region which is hindering liberalization trade in services. There are other major centrifugal forces which are economic and non-economic and operating simultaneously. Political and non-economic factors are hindering trade liberalization in the region, he said.

Limited market size is another obstruction which is also hindering liberalization of trade in services. Trade in services primarily comes from two motives: one is through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and; second through labour mobility. Due to conflicts between the countries in the region, these two motives are very restricted and need to be removed to bring a positive change in trade in services.

Moreover, institutional and regulatory frameworks are the two main factors for economic integration which create political and social integration in the region. Social and economic integration are mutually reinforcing. However, the chain starts with the political integration that drives the economic integration through institutional and regulatory framework, he said.

Eighteenth SDC Opening Plenary:
Securing Peace and Prosperity

Welcome Address: Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairperson Board of Governors, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan
Introduction: Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan
Remarks by the Chief Guest: Mr. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms, Government of Pakistan
Launch of Publications:
1. SDC Anthology: Pathways to Sustainable Development
2. Making Growth Inclusive, Just and Sustainable in South Asia
4. Human Development in South Asia 2015: The Economy and the People
Keynote Speaker:
Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya, Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh
Keynote Lecture Title: Revisiting South Asian Cooperative Relationship through the Prism of 2030 Global Agenda of Sustainable Development
Report by: Ms Hira Mirza, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan

Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairperson Board of Governors, SDPI, opened the session by expressing his gratitude to the Honourable Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reform, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, for gracing the event as the Chief Guest at the opening plenary of the Eighteenth Sustainable Development Conference (SDC) on 8 December 2015, and extended a warm welcome to all the participants from Pakistan as well as South Asia and other parts of the world to the Conference.
he cautioned, continued to host the largest number of the world's poor, i.e. nearly 40%. In India alone, 309 million were poor, while several hundred million had no access to electricity, basic sanitation, and basic facilities. In Pakistan, there had been an exponential increase in poverty since the 2008 crisis. It is therefore necessary for the governments and other stakeholders to step up their endeavours not only to achieve economic development, but for inclusive development which would combat the scourge of poverty and deprivation.

This year’s SDC and SAES took place against the backdrop of momentous developments at the global level, he said. “We had the landmark UN General Assembly session which has set new Sustainable Development Goals: 17 goals and 169 targets covering the whole spectrum of challenges and issues that mark the overall global economic, social and environmental landscape,” he emphasized, adding, “We have also had the important meeting in Adis Ababa on financing for development.”

Talking further, Ambassador Kakakhel pointed out, “As we speak, nearly 45,000 people representing governments, private sector, scientific community and all other stakeholders are meeting in Paris to deal with what is truly the defining challenge of our age; a challenge which will have profound impacts on all the people; in rich countries and poor; in small countries and big; in the north, south west and east.” He asserted that our response to multi-faceted challenges of climate change would determine the future of our planet which was threatened by our own actions since the industrial revolution.

“The SDC is happening in Pakistan with the backdrop of adoption of Vision 2025, which the honourable Federal Minister, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, has had a direct role in developing,” he said. He was glad to note that Prof. Iqbal, a member of the Board of Governors of SDPI, had taken his work as a member very seriously and attended meetings in spite of his many responsibilities. “SDPI has also had the honour of being associated with extensive consultations that went into the articulation of ideas that have been reflected and stipulated in the Vision 2025 framework which is meant to respond to the economic, social and environmental challenges facing Pakistan,” maintained Ambassador Kakakhel.

He hoped that the deliberations made in the Conference would in some way help in coming up with suggestions which our policymakers and stakeholders could consider for ensuring a better today and even a better tomorrow for our people.

After extending a warm welcome, Dr. Abid Qayyium Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, noted that the Sustainable Development Conference had become one of the most important forums in Pakistan for regional agenda setting on a range of economic, development, social and political issues.

The more important it has got, he observed, the more crucial it has become necessary for the participants to keep nudging
and pushing themselves against complacent approach to tackle pressing problems which had only worsened as this forum had matured.

Dr. Suleri reflected back to the time when SDPI was founded 23 years ago. He said that the framework we wanted to operate in was well-understood as sustainable development was all about social justice, economic equity and the need for preserving natural resources that the earth had to offer.

Today the age of innocence seems to have vanished, he shared. Competition over limited resources had intensified as these resources themselves had dwindled, and something as sinister and lethal a change in the climate had become a reality. In places such as Beijing and Lahore, a yellow fog continued to pollute the air and water we consumed and poisoned our food chain, he cautioned. Addressing the problems of the world was no longer about fair distribution of wealth, power and resources; it now concerned more of a fundamental issue: our very existence, he emphasized.

Going back to the level of regional integration that existed in the colonial times had now been more difficult. It was in this context, Dr. Suleri maintained, that the role of SAARC and other regional cooperative mechanisms had become central. The mega picture of contemporary South Asia suggested that challenges had become increasingly varied and real, the time to address them was running out fast. Global warming and climate change were bringing unexpected changes in different fields such as in meteorology, agriculture, natural disaster, rising of sea level, and melting of glaciers. Irrespective of their low carbon emission and the COP21 Paris outcome, South Asian governments had to act fast to adopt climate adaptation as their indigenous agenda. Likewise, after missing a few MDGs, there was no room to fail on SDGs, cautioned Dr. Suleri.

While referring to South Asia, Dr. Suleri reminded the audience that one could not forget that this was a conflicted region with inter- and intra-state conflicts in ethnicity, geography, state, politics and economy. There was a need for a new South Asia which was at peace with itself, he recommended. Peace could only be achieved by understanding, and gatherings like the SDC could point to solutions that lead to peace and prosperity which in turn were sustainable, and that could be adopted in a cooperative and collaborative manner.

Dr. Suleri highlighted the need for a common agenda to address common issues of climate change, sharing of natural resources, resolution of political and social conflicts, fair and equitable spread of education, healthcare, technology and employment. Only then it could demand that its inhabitants get a more equitable distribution of resources from the rest of the world. Strong internal collaboration would therefore justify demand for similar operation and collaboration at the global level, but would also show among the SAARC region how much collaboration could be productive.

The two events provided an opportunity to scholars, research and policy experts, as well as public thought leaders from across South Asia and the world to contribute towards agenda setting of SAARC leaders for the 19th summit, scheduled to be held in Islamabad in 2016, he said.

He communicated the theme of the SDC, Securing Peace and Prosperity, and conveyed that it was consciously chosen to echo with SAARC’s collective conscience of promoting peace, amity and progress in the region. This was the forum for breaking the status quo, he urged, and the right time to bring change. With a new set of sustainable goals, a possible deal on climate change in COP21, further trade liberalization in WTO Trade Ministerial Meeting in Kenya, and various indigenous solutions such as Vision 2025 in Pakistan, the region had to respond through its preparedness to embark upon new commitments.

Being a board member of SDPI, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, expressed his pride to see intellect that combined both policy and practice from across the world under one roof.

He commented on the theme of the Conference and said that the SDGs would remain a distant dream for our region unless our countries worked to become secure, open and partners for achievement for long term prosperity.

He lamented that our region contained a large population of malnourished and deprived population. Even when we had clear identification of challenges and well-laid out plans to address welfare issues, there was little that countries had achieved to show that they were serious about solving multifaceted problems. This age of paradigm shift needed a matching response. One of the major challenges was climate change as it was becoming a human security issue, he emphasized, adding, a region which had 20% of the world’s population, was the most vulnerable to this challenge,
particularly because their livelihood was directly attached to sectors which were direct victims of climate change. The economies of this region all revolved around water in one way or another, which was under great threat.

This region had its own complexities and suffered from major challenge to human resource in the form of poverty, malnourishment, illiteracy, and infant mortality. Economic indicators may rank us as middle-income countries, but social indicators put us at the bottom of the spectrum, he pointed out. The region, Professor Iqbal felt, was not fully aware of the extent of the challenge we faced, as governments and civil societies, we were yet to show concrete steps which would integrate this region economically and socially. The leadership in all countries would have to fully understand the challenge to move forward on the path of regional cooperation and to benefit ourselves, he stressed.

He suggested long-term planning for eradication of social challenges and commitment of resources, along with implementation and monitoring of programmes. No action or sustained practice was seen, however, due to the fact that the journey to a peaceful region had only started, he emphasized.

Communicating the government’s long term plan for sustainable development in Pakistan, the Minister spoke about the bold agenda under Vision 2025. He explained that this was the result of a consultation organized by the Prime Minister including a wide range of stakeholders: public sector, civil society, political parties, and the private sector, to frame innovative strategies for Pakistan.

To kick-start sustainable development in the medium-term, solutions needed to be economically efficient yet pro-poor. He believed that a secure and prosperous South Asia would be a catalyst in helping us achieve our goals. Therefore, a holistic and integrated approach to addressing security paradigm was the top most priority.

A stable macroeconomic environment with important structural reforms eventually led by the private sector were also aimed at, he said. Operation Zarb-e-Azab had continued to assist in improving the security situation, he said, creating a climate for higher Foreign Direct Investment in the future.

The Vision of the Planning Commission was also based on a shared vision for the country: safeguard political stability, protecting rule of law, ensuring environment of peace and security, and promoting social justice, pointed out the Minister. All of this would assist in increasing investment for social and human augmentation, providing employment opportunities, integrated energy reform, indigenous resource mobilization, and institutional reforms for governance.

Pakistan would be presented to regional neighbours as an energy corridor and will connect people and places. This was being done through China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and would bring regional connectivity, stability and development. It envisaged integration of three engines of growth in Asia: South Asia, China and Central Asia.

The country faced three critical questions, he pointed out:

1. How to consolidate gains made in successful security law and order operations so a peaceful environment helps in economic activity?
2. How to bring about and sustain high economic growth to create jobs, especially for the young population?
3. How to mitigate risk and faced by the poor and vulnerable to ensure sustained, balanced and inclusive growth?

The Federal Minister spoke about steps taken by the Government in the agriculture sector, where most poverty was experienced. Income of small and medium farmers needed to be improved, and growth linkages for rural economies were being set up. Special attention was given to increased agricultural productivity through diversification, use of fertilizers, seeds, etc. Pakistan would be dedicated to productivity, quality and innovation in the coming years for better competitiveness, he informed the audience. Special economic zones were being pursued, with tax breaks based on export gains. Social safety nets, including cash transfer programmes, such as the BISP, for the poor would also form an important pillar of the government’s strategy, he maintained.

After the 18th Amendment, future plans involved close coordination with provincial governments to achieve targets of sustainable development, said the Minister. For instance, he informed the audience, an SDG unit had also been set up at the federal level, and would be integrated with the provinces.

Professor Iqbal noted that bold visions were being envisaged in South Asia and a new breed of leadership had emerged in the region which had the resolve to take the region forward. The Minister therefore suggested a collective South Asian Vision 2025 which would combat poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, through a holistic development agenda.

After the conclusion of his speech, the Minister launched the following publications and was also presented of set of the books:

- SDC Anthology: Pathways to Sustainable Development
- Making Growth Inclusive, Just and Sustainable in South Asia
- Human Development in South Asia 2015: The Economy and the People

Giving a keynote lecture on Revisiting South Asian Cooperative Relationship through the Prism of 2030 Global Agenda of Sustainable Development, Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya felt that, in many ways, the mega events complemented regional and global initiatives.

He noted that at the September 2015 meeting of the UN General Assembly, where world leaders adopted the declaration Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the widely discussed and focused issues were:

- Agenda Implementation and Monitoring of SDGs
- Tailoring SDGs to National Context

However, Dr. Bhattacharya said that the important questions that arose from this was whether or not South Asia could benefit from the new global development agenda? Could we use the SDGs to further our regional cooperation initiatives in any way? In the case of MDGs, regional cooperation was not a major goal. However, cross-border and internal conflicts were still the biggest threat to human development. Along with this, data availability for monitoring and assessment of progress from a regional perspective was always lacking.
He traced social indicators of South Asia and informed the audience that the region had the second highest Global Hunger Index scores (2015) after Africa and one of the lowest Human Development Index values (2014), with high rates of unemployment. He located MDGs and 2030 Agenda in SAARC Summit Documents: in 2005, achievement of SAARC Development Goals was co-related to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Heads of states called for measures to realize the SDGs, including universal primary education in the context of pursuing the Millennium Development Goals, and implementation of the Millennium Declaration.

He pointed towards the regional perspective in SDGs in the following areas: poverty, food security, infrastructure, inclusivity, oceans and marine resources, and science, technology and innovation. Many areas like health, employment and economic growth were not covered however. Government, private sector and CSOs needed to work closely to face challenges, advised Dr. Bhattacharya.

Compared with other sub-regions, South and South-West Asia had been slow in leveraging regional economic integration, and underemployment had been high. He analysed the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector, as well as literacy rate, maternal mortality, and environment to track progress of South Asian countries and their expected pace in achieving SDGs.

Security and development were also closely linked, as noted in the Millennium Declaration, and played central roles in human well-being and poverty eradication. Multidimensional conflict scenarios also existed in several South Asian states including conventional boundary and territorial conflicts, and non-conventional security threats. Current research showed that overall context of SAARC remained too weak to give a new impetus to security cooperation.

Examining Goal 16 of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) i.e., “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”, Dr. Bhattacharya noted that peace and security challenges were not only man-made; natural disasters also posed threats to peace in South Asia.

He closed the discussion by recommending to:

- Build SAARC architecture
- Collaborate with regional commission, regional development banks and other regional entities
- Invest resources in performing coordination function within region and beyond
- Cover all SDGs, particularly the regional priorities
- Ensure participation of stakeholders such as CSOs/NGOs, private sector, scientific community, think tanks with adequate avenues of engagement
- Generate quality and timely data and statistics by strengthening regional capacities and national systems
- Put in place evidence-based independent assessment and effective follow-up tools and modalities
- Link up to the global and national processes of SDG/FfD reviews and follow-ups
The session was chaired by Dr. Hafiz Pasha, Former Federal Minister Finance, Government of Pakistan. He talked about Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) and discussed that the South Asian countries would be moving forward with an unfinished agenda of Millennium Developmental Goals (MDGs). Dr. Pasha said that among the SAARC countries, Nepal and Bhutan did well in MDGs agenda, while Pakistan had performed the worst at number six based on its performance and accomplishment. No developing country in the world had been able to achieve eight core MDG targets. He highlighted that China and Vietnam had achieved nearly seven. China would have to play a generous role in allowing and ensuring that other less developed countries in South Asia and Central Asia developed to meet the SDG targets. Issues of localisation of SDGs were also discussed. He said that there was an issue of inequality and governance among and within countries, which created instability. During his speech he said that two words were frequently used to depict the central message of SDGs; sustainable and inclusive. They had been used 17 and 10 times respectively.

Dr. Nagesh Kumar, head of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Sub regional Office for South and South-West Asia (ESCAP-SSWA), India, highlighted the key priorities of SDGs and implementation challenges. He said that MDGs in South Asia were an unfinished agenda and this would be the last chance to get rid of poverty and tackle hunger for all people of South Asia. It was noticed that South Asian countries possessed 25% of world population that faced 40% poverty and low-level of development.

Dr. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries, India, highlighted means of implementation (MOI) and the need of technology sharing for effective data monitoring and accountability, which was extremely important as South Asia moved towards SDGs. He said that there were several challenges to implement SDGs, which was a major task of resource and access to technology. Implementation of SDGs lay with individual states; developing countries must be given adequate resources; technology should be part of countries development. Dr.
Chaturvedi said that research institutions and civil society must be promoted for better availability of data and incorporate technology facilitation mechanism. He continued that it was also noticed in transition for MDGs to SDGs that MDG goal eight was to focus on global partnership but failed to promote human development.

Dr. Habil Christian Wanger, Senior Fellow, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin, Germany, gave a comprehensive presentation on security, peace and prosperity in South Asia. He pointed out that governance in South Asia was a major challenge in the region. Dr. Wagner said that there was security and security cooperation threats along with regional instability and weak governance. Non-traditional and traditional security threats were also mentioned. Dr. Wagner elaborated that traditional security threats included territorial, border dispute, Kashmir problem, Durand line, etc. While explaining the non-traditional threats, he mentioned that they were transnational and included human security issues such as poverty, climate change, deforestation, water, militancy, organised religious fundamentalism, left wing violence and human trafficking.

Dr. Wagner also mentioned security cooperation in South Asia and further explained that it was very important, which included multilateral and bilateral co-operations.

Dr. Rajan Bhattarai, Member Constituent Assembly and Legislative Parliament, Government of Nepal, said that Nepal was an unstable country in terms of issues like education, health and poverty. He said that by overcoming the political insurgencies, Nepal had been able to overcome these issues. Dr. Bhattarai said that the poverty levels in Nepal had reduced significantly from 40% to nearly 23%. He mentioned that Nepal was in progress to overcome maternal and child mortality rate. He further said that SDGs could be achieved through localisation and collaborative approach. It was concluded that different kinds of environmental issues could be overcome by collaborative approach. Dr. Bhattarai said that we needed collaborative support from interactive parties and institutions and review our developmental policies in order to formulate and adopt inclusive policies.

Dr. Dushni Weerakoon, Deputy Director, from the Institute of Policy Studies, Sri Lanka, spoke on the need to look at both the gains and losses in the transition from MDGs to SDGs. She said that in terms of gains, SDGs had become an important part of shift in the thinking of development. She continued that the main purpose of SDGs was reducing poverty and targeting goals to achieve them. She said that loss could be seen in terms of accountability, loss of focus, lack of effective prioritisation and monitoring methods. Dr. Weerakoon said that SDGs were very broad to implement reforms in education. She said that the coordination between different sectors was a very complex process. Beside these she also touched upon other significant issues in Sri Lanka including governance, poverty, inequality and environmental issues.

Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan, said that SDGs like the earlier MDGs ignored intra and inter-state differences and again had committed to goals without uniformity across borders. He further explained that most developing countries achieved SDGs in a linear way but sustainability was not linear. Linearity did not work in sustainable development. Dr. Suleri said that the silos approach did not work in MDGs, instead sustainability was a collective approach. If collectivity was not there, it would not be effective. He focused on Pakistan and lamented that in Pakistan there was no cooperation between the federal and provincial governments and ministries. Dr. Suleri said that in the economic survey we had ignored poverty, and that there was a need to indigenize MDGs. Dr. Suleri concluded by saying that we must not block our vision and dreams under income levels and that we must internalise and show ownership to the Vision 2025 and SDG goals.
While welcoming everyone to the Eighth South Asian Economic Summit, leading journalist Ms Asma Shirazi from the Channel 92, emphasized on the current role being played by the Pakistani media and the collective need of media across South Asia in regional cooperation. She said that in order to bridge the gap in the region and promote regional cooperation between the SAARC countries, media can play a very positive role by being objective as we share common grounds and common problems. She quoted her own example when she faced racism on her first visit to India and then the changes in their attitudes at the next occasion. Journalists from India were surprised to see the real liberal women of Pakistan who are free to do whatever they want. Media introduces people across geographical boundaries and thrusts to solve economic problems. However, there is a need to improve our relationships, she emphasized, and that media can play a role in bringing people closer.

The chair, Mr. Nisar Memon, former Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Government of Pakistan, remarked that in order to ensure regional cooperation there is a need to strengthen the leadership of SAARC. He highlighted their common culture, heritage and issues faced by the people of this region and stressed that media can play a role in bringing peace and prosperity to the region.

He said that SAARC with its eight member countries has a population of about 1.7 billion, i.e. 20% of world population. The countries are at various stages of democracy and forms of governance. The region is characterised by social inequalities, illiteracy, inadequate social services, increasing religious extremism and intolerance and to top it all it has several unresolved conflicts resulting in low intensity warfare. Poverty continues despite enormous natural resources of sea and mountains, rich cultural heritage and history, reasonably developed
institutions and laws, enormous diversity with resilient people who have survived external aggressions, sabotage and natural disasters. These billion people are clamouring for a better life, he emphasized.

Mr. Memon stressed that this can best be achieved by regional cooperation, which regional leadership in 1985 decided to forge in the form of SAARC, showing greater political will for economic cooperation towards progress and development. In this backdrop, media must play a role in conflict management rather than conflict creation within the countries, region and internationally. Paradigm shift is essential in the 21st century for regional integration, by increasing trust and designing people-centric plans.

Mr. Rinzin Wangchuk, journalist from the Kuensel Corporation Ltd, Bhutan, stressed on the importance of media for ensuring peace in the community as it removes enmity from the global culture which has been caused due to cultural diversity in South Asia. He raised questions about the quality of media content being provided to the people and preferences of average people for content exposure. He proposed to address common issues on regional platforms through media as it is the responsibility of media to question our role and reflect our input in regional cooperation, peace and prosperity.

He further added that we are suffering from natural calamities all over the region. So media should thrive to bring a change with participatory approach for foreign programmes

Mr. Noor-ul-Kabir from “The daily News Age”, Bangladesh remarked that whatever media says is not always correct as it serves different interests. Instead of being nationalistic, media should be unbiased and free from colonialism in all circumstances. He also highlighted the need for a common narrative of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. He believes that media is not playing its role in conflict resolution. He further added that media nowadays is only a business and its prime objective is to maximize profits. He urged that media should be used to restore peace and prosperity in the region and its content should not only be for the people of its own country but for the whole region. Depending upon targets, media can provide people friendly information for everyone irrespective of geographical barriers.

Mr. Umashankar Singh, Foreign Affairs Editor NDTV, India, emphasized on the role of media in generating public opinion and referred to the situation between India and Pakistan. He proposed that nationalism is essential but we should understand the direction in which it is leading us and the need to re-establish our priorities. Media can use its power to cooperate with neighbouring countries. Problems related to energy and food crisis can be dealt effectively if proper programmes are screened. He referred to the ban of PTV World in India. People in India need media channels to show the real situation, lifestyle, norms and traditions of common Pakistanis. He also appreciated the role of Zindagi channel which has helped common Indians to learn about the lives of common Pakistanis who are living peacefully.

He lamented that we depend upon monolithic image only but in reality it is diversified. Instead of dealing with issues collectively we accuse each other and show intolerance which cannot solve problems. He stressed on creation of a common bureau between Pakistan, India and Bangladesh for the exchange of news and views. “Why can't we use good points from other nations for our mutual interest?” he questioned.

He appreciated the hospitality of Pakistanis and stressed on establishment of a media university for proper training of journalists so that they may serve to present agendas from both the countries in a friendly manner. Last but not the least, there is a need to ensure frequent visits by journalists in neighbouring countries.

While concluding the session Mr. Nisar Memon said that our challenges are enormous but can be surmounted by the determination and aspiration of our people for peace and development. The challenge for regional media is to educate
the people on local, regional, and global issues with in-depth analysis of issues and offer non-sensational reporting of events to alert the grave dangers ahead for planners and policy makers.

He elaborated that the scientific research should be directed to adaptation and mitigation of communities being affected by the increased CO\textsuperscript{2} and temperatures; and, private-public partnership to produce solutions for judicial use of water resources passing from regional mountains through territorial boundaries of our countries. Mr. Memon stressed that media must educate on water environment challenges of climate change impact and disaster management by encouraging countries for trans-border data and information exchange to serve as Early Warning Systems for GLOF, floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters.

Mr. Nisar Memon concluded this by saying that media’s role is paramount in awareness, mitigation and resilience in natural hazards as well as gender equality, sustained development, MDGs to SDGs, and media pre and post role. He said that media must focus on collective regional security measures against terrorism and highlight practical steps of cooperation and in exposing corruption and cross border corruption.

The panel ended on the note with reference to the need of objective reporting by the journalists and the formation of a media university in SAARC countries.

Dr. Hiramani Ghimire, Executive Director of South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal, started the discussion by questioning what it was like to be women entrepreneurs in South Asia. He said that entrepreneurship in South Asia is mostly limited to men; women own only 8-10% small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Many times women do unpaid jobs and have less access to productive inputs, resources and technology. Women also have low political and economic participation. South Asia is at the bottom of the gender gap index. Our patriarchal values also hinder women entrepreneurship. Even if a woman starts a business, she has low profit as compared to what men get. Relating this gap to sustainable development, if GDP is to be increased, women need to be involved in the economic affairs, he stressed. It is also a global experience that businesses involving females are more successful. In South Asia, women represent 27% of labour force, and only 15% of the firms have female managers. Thus to mend the gender gap in South Asia, gender responsive policies, and gender responsive budgeting needs to be done, creating an environment for women entrepreneurs to bloom.

Ms Yumiko Yamamoto, Policy Specialist, UNDP, Thailand, said that the percentage of women businesses in South Asia is 8%, whereas for East Asia and the Pacific, it is about 48%, indicating great disparity. She presented some research findings which stated that women entrepreneurs in South Asia are self-motivated to be self-employed, are micro-entrepreneurs at home and their businesses are localized. Women are not directly engaged in trade, have limited mobility, face harassment and terrorism, encounter difficulties in accessing information and lack training. Thus there is a need to develop horizontal network for women to
share information; and, to establish district level central warehouse and facilitation centres. Efforts to expand women’s access to loans are not meeting the needs; application procedure is also not friendly for women. Although women receive trainings, they are not satisfied with supply-driver and academic materials. Thus possible interventions could be promotion of border market, voluntary organic certification system, local facilities that provide certification with international standards, and environment friendly certification of female owned firms.

Dr. Sunil Motiwala, Chief Executive Officer, SAARC Development Fund (SDF), Bhutan, explained that SDF is the funding umbrella institute, which focuses on regional integration through project funding and collaboration. SDF was inaugurated by eight governments, with the aim of welfare of these countries and improvement of the quality of people's life. SDF aims at working in three domains, i.e. social, economic, and infrastructure. Forty-five projects of worth 80 billion dollars have been initiated in the social domain, whereas works in domain of economy and infrastructure are yet to be started. The organization provides grants, co-funding with other organizations, and various concessions for the purpose of poverty alleviation, and improvement of education, health, etc. New initiative of SDF aims at social enterprise development programmes, under which ten programmes will be started in each of the member countries. Furthermore, public-private partnership programmes, are also being promoted.

The UN has given an estimate that there would be about 89 billion dollars growth in the economy of South Asia if women are empowered and involved in businesses. For this, SDF has proposed a need of change in women’s mobility and social interaction, labour patterns, and access to resources. Their need for education, nutrition, and employment, etc., should be fulfilled. Focus of SDF is supporting women entrepreneurs and home based workers in South Asia, providing them regional business opportunities through online jobs, supporting their businesses’ development, marketing their products at regional and international levels, and providing them trainings.

Ms Pramila Arcahrya Rijal, Chairperson SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Women Entrepreneurs Council (SCWEC), Nepal, made a point that women entrepreneurs at SMEs' level are very few, i.e. 10% of 51% women are contributing to it. This is because they face many challenges, such as social challenges, and lack of connectivity to urban market. To counter these, women should be empowered economically, and organizations should provide more opportunities. Women should be exposed to outer conditions and their capacity building should be done. They should be made part of public-private partnership projects and they should take challenges. Association of Lady Entrepreneurs of Andhra Pradesh (ALEAP) is the first women entrepreneur enterprise in India. It has made a green industrial park having a master site plan. The women of the organization have bought that place, are managing it, and making a good example of women entrepreneurship. To help women, SAARC should form Convention on Women Entrepreneurship to promote cooperation with and among women, and develop a regional project which would be successful. It should include South Asian Women Development Forum (SAWDF), organization with a SAARC recognized body status, in regional forums/summits for planning and capacity building for women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurship can make a particularly strong contribution to the economic well-being of their families and communities.

Ms Roubina Tauﬁq Shah, Director General, Trade Dispute Resolution Organization (TDRO), Islamabad, said that Pakistan has 48.6% female population, whereas women entrepreneurs are only 10%, having a ratio of 1:21 to men. Women are mostly involved in traditional sectors of handmade items, handicrafts, gifts, furniture, etc., showing that arts of any region are maintained because of women, they are innovative and creative, and can become vendors for larger companies. Challenges faced by women of
SAARC countries include corruption, poor infrastructure, and lack of cooperation from trade promotion offices. Males are not sensitized and consider that women cannot be entrepreneurs. There is lack of regional activities to promote women entrepreneurship. Also women have inadequate knowledge of international trade policies, cargo and shipment costs, and procedures; are harassed by custom and port authorities; and cannot afford high input costs. Percentage of women entrepreneurs is less as they have lack of expertise, finance, mobility, support from family, trust in each other, and knowledge. Women also face problems in product selection, and do not know how branding should be done. They usually operate small scale self-owned businesses and enter a few traditional areas. Even out of this small percentage, 70% of female businesses die the very first year, as they do not have efficient business plans, make products not demanded by market, are not aware of their target audience, have poor capita structure, and lack reserve funds. Thus, she concluded, there is a need for capacity building of women entrepreneurs. Their products should be easy to handle and should be diversified. They should be trained to prepare business plan, and should be involved in service centres. For this, cluster concept can be applied, which implies that many organizations work together in collaboration.

The session concluded with the remarks that nothing can be attained if women entrepreneurs are not involved as they play a very vital role in sustainable development.

Session B-4: Competition Reforms and Sustainable Development

Chair: Mr. Ahmed Qadir, Director General, Competition Commission of Pakistan
Special Remarks: Mr. Asad Umar, Member National Assembly of Pakistan
Speakers:
Mr. Nadeem Iqbal, Executive Coordinator and CEO, The Network of Consumer Protection, Pakistan
Mr. Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General, Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) International, India
Dr. Aneel Salman, In-Charge Business Program, COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT), Islamabad, Pakistan
Mr. Muhammad Adnan, Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan
Panel Organizer: Ms Anam Khan, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
Report by: Mr. Malik Haroon, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), and Ms Bakhtawar Munir, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Mr. Ahmed Qadir, Director General, Competition Commission of Pakistan, while introducing the speakers said that he was pleased to have this opportunity to chair the session and thanked the organizers.

Mr. Nadeem Iqbal, Executive Coordinator and CEO, The Network of Consumer Protection, Pakistan, highlighted the need for consumer protection while talking on “Enhancing the Scope of Competition Regime in Pakistan”. His emphasis was on the significance of laws to regulate the competition policies of firms.

He brought to attention the efforts by businesses to subvert the health regulations in Pakistan and referred to a number of instances. He focussed his discussion on the measures taken by the tobacco industry against relevant policies and health regulations implemented by authorities in the country.
Mr. Iqbal discussed the role of the United Nations (UN) in tobacco control. He pointed out that the UN has incorporated the tobacco control in the Goal 3 of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

He shed some light on the consumer protection system and regulatory framework already in place in Pakistan. In the end, he gave recommendations to enhance and strengthen the consumer protection system of the country. Those recommendations included: implementing the Whistleblower Protection Law and the Right to Information Law, forming a comprehensive policy for monitoring and surveillance in Competition Commission, and enforcing the labelling of ingredients on all products.

Mr. Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General, Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) International, India, gave a detailed perspective on the “Role of Competition Policy in Promoting Sustainable Development”. He shared the experiences of CUTS in the realization of the obvious and less obvious linkages that exist between the competition policy reforms and sustainable development. While underlining the significance of competition policy, he noted that it is a broad concept encompassing other government policies, such as the industrial policy, investment policy, and trade policy.

Further backing his viewpoint, he presented some pieces of evidence on success in achieving the SDGs through competition reforms. Citing one such evidence, he explained how in Bihar (India), the access of farmers to good quality, low-cost seeds, has been improved. Concluding his talk, he gave recommendations to enhance and optimize the competition reforms in line with the socio-economic objectives of DCs. Some of those recommendations were: designing competition reforms to strengthen its obvious links with economic growth, industrialization, and job creation, consideration of less obvious links by practitioners and scholars of competition reforms with access to essential services, women's empowerment, and using SDGs as an opportunity to demonstrate how competition reforms can lead to tangible and measurable impacts.
Dr. Aneel Salman, In-Charge Business Program, COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT), Islamabad, Pakistan, reflected on the dilemma of choosing between “Strong Regulations or Space for Innovation” for the information technology markets (tech markets). While underscoring the highly dynamic nature of tech markets, he stated the impossibility of perfect competition or market equilibrium in today’s information technology marketplace.

He mentioned that competition in information technology is more about competing for new markets rather than competing in the existing markets and, therefore, most successful internet based companies are nearly monopolists. He said that the tech firms have indubitably dominated the market share and, thus, instead of asking whether these firms have such a dominant position, competition policy regimes should be more interested in why they have such a large market share.

He called for the need to inquire the reason as to why do these internet monopolists enjoy a dominant position: is it because they are protected from competition through barriers to entry, or do they just enjoy the profits of superior technology and innovation?

Dr. Salman, presenting the whole picture, said that one side of the argument is that information industries traffic informs of individual expression; they are fundamental to democracy, and should, therefore, be subject to greater regulatory treatment.

While giving out the other side of the debate, he said that perennial gales of creative destruction, reverberate all around us in the tech economy, and innovative risk-takers are constantly shaking things up and displacing yesterday’s lumbering, lethargic giants. He noted that according to this side of the debate, online markets or social media platforms are unlike traditional public utilities — tech markets change rapidly; taking several months or even years to complete rulemakings or litigate remedies will almost certainly mean that most rules will be out of date by the time they are implemented.

Mr. Muhammad Adnan, Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan, said that there is a consensus that competition markets are good for growth efficiency and productivity in the real sector of the economy. However, in several sectors of Pakistan we see that governments own corporate entities, those also include corporate entities of armed forces. Such entities end up competing with the private sector.

Mr. Asad Umar, Member National Assembly (MNA), Government of Pakistan, said there was widespread cartelization of the industry. He stated, “An industry will be competitive only if volumes are maintained which is only possible if prices are kept down. But prohibitive duties prevent this from happening, in turn, killing demand and preventing a true market economy structure which encourages competition.” He asserted that the right to make money came with responsibility and so companies could not have inhuman working conditions.
Research & News Bulletin

Session B-5:
Investment in Agriculture in South Asia and Scope for Regional Cooperation

Chair: Dr. Mustafiz ur Rahman, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka, Bangladesh
Speakers:
Mr. Hiramani Ghimire, Executive Director, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal
Ms Simrit Kaur, Professor of Public policy, University of Delhi, India
Mr. Shakeel Ahmed Ramay, Senior Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
Panel Organiser and Moderator: Ms Huma Khan, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
Report by: Ms Mehwish Akhter and Ms Huma Khan, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Dr. Mustafiz ur Rahman, chairing the session, stressed upon the importance of the theme under discussion. He said that investment in agriculture had become very important because of challenges faced in raising productivity.

Mr. Hiramani Ghimire stated that agriculture sector played a vital role with its contribution to food security and employment. The agriculture sector contributed around 20% to GDP and employed around 60% of the workforce. He stated that agriculture in South Asia was highly vulnerable to climate change. Larger impacts were feared in the future with increasing risk of extreme weather events such as floods, heat waves, cyclones and droughts. Women account for 71% of labour force with variation in individual count. A survey showed that productivity of agriculture labour was the highest in Pakistan and lowest in Nepal. He ended his presentation by saying that significant role of public sector in agriculture was required as agriculture in almost all countries was private sector driven and recommended that investment in agriculture should be combined with investment for agriculture. He further recommended that investments in research and development (R&D) should be increased given its potential to increase return on investment covering issues such as technology transfer, inter-sectoral linkages, development of physical infrastructure and gender-specific interventions, and strengthening backward and forward linkages like transport systems, markets and extension services. Pro-active measures should be adopted on disaster management and remittance resources towards a stronger agriculture sector should be mobilized like improving irrigation systems. Moreover, complementarities between public and private sectors should be promoted. He was of the view that public investment in agriculture could give individual rewards to the farmers, and collective rewards to the economy. Investment in subsidy including food price subsidy, input subsidy and export subsidy were other components of agricultural investment.

Ms Simrit Kaur was of the view that the future of countries did not lie on guns but on grains which led to peace, prosperity and development. She stated that growth depended upon investment. The main issue in agricultural capital stock revolved around quality of assets and insignificant data set. Improved data would enhance the analysis of agricultural investment as empirical analysis of investments in agriculture was difficult due to limited availability and poor quality of data. It would also enhance agricultural capital stock, government expenditure, research and development, foreign direct investment, natural capital and investment in value chains. Therefore,
Ms Kaur further shared the experience of e-Choupal located in a farmer's house. It served 6,000 farmers, 10 villages and had provided a win-win situation for stakeholders. Set of websites provided farmers with information on best practices and prevailing prices in the local and international markets. E-Choupal helped in on-time full payments, scientific testing methods, better remuneration for better quality products, and reimbursement of transportation expenses. She ended her presentation by saying that it would be the private sector, all the way along the value chain from farmer to consumer that would make the most significant investments in agriculture. She further added that governments supported by donors and financing institutions first needed to create a favourable context and climate to encourage those investments. Focus should be on improved water resources management through collaboration on scientific research in terms of data collection and modelling, designing water allocation schemes and contingency plans for extreme events.

Mr. Shakeel Ahmed Ramay said that investment was one of the present challenges in agriculture. Most important was where to invest and how to invest? We, therefore, need to identify how to overcome the problem as 80%-90% funding was available for salary whereas only 10%-20% was available for R&D. He stressed upon focussing on the issues of water, food and energy and on building linkages among the people and looking towards the people investment in human capital/capacities.

The chair, Dr. Mustafiz ur Rahman, concluded the session by saying that the food hike from 2007-2008 and when the SAARC did not really work led to the awareness of food insecurity. Building on institution and continuation of food trade was required. He elaborated that 60% of workforce was producing 20% of GDP, therefore, a new generation of technology and institution was needed to overcome this problem.
Dr. Ishrat Husain Dean & Director, Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi, Pakistan, presided as Chair of the session. He said that South Asia was the least integrated region of the world in terms of trade and economic hubs like Dubai that were deriving the benefits, which should have been internalised in this region. Regarding the political economy of transit trade, he said that it was more political, than economical. He added that bilateral relations between India and Pakistan had kept this region less integrated.

Dr. Prabir De said that it was difficult to identify whether we would benefit from regional transit trade or not, as there were costs to transit trade as well, such as effects on environment due to infrastructure. He further added that to Pakistan, we (India) were a part of the MFN (Most Favored Nation) trade but we did not exchange on the MFN routes. He finally said that transit trade should be secure and safe and a single window policy in customs should be adopted, so that people were free from the bureaucratic hassle and delays.

Dr. Rameshore Prasad Khanal, Former Finance Secretary, Government of Nepal said that lengthy and time-consuming procedures were also a problem besides infrastructure, which were restricting the transportation of goods across countries. He further said that trade could be easily done on information and communication products as well as they had a huge potential. He also said that the role of India as a facilitator for transit rights and trade was very important. He stated that due to very poor transit trade mechanism, small and medium enterprises were not gaining the benefits from trade. Discussing the importance of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Dr. Khanal pointed out that when CPEC would be functional, it would also trigger
other economic corridors in the region. He finally added that trade movements should not be subjected to political issues and should be kept separate.

Mr. Haroon Sharif from the World Bank, Islamabad, started by presenting a contrast between East Asia and South Asia and said that because of geo-political issues, trade in East Asia had grown while South Asia had suffered. He continued that economic corridors needed to be converted from mere physical infrastructures to a source of providing benefits to the people. He stated that academics needed to bring economics into the political economy of trade. He praised the fact that the establishing of joint economic commissions was a welcoming trend. Mr. Sharif was of the opinion that there was a disconnect between the politicians and bureaucrats, hence the legislation was present yet there was lack of implementation of economic policies. He said that the private sector lacked the understanding of Western economies and for that purpose, knowledge sharing should be done at the private level as well as the state level. While concluding his speech he also mentioned the influence of mainstream media by saying that it should build its economic narrative based on evidence, rather than conjecture.

Mr. Brendan Vickers, Economic Advisor from Commonwealth Secretariat, UK, said that a good port was necessary for the success of any economic corridor; like the port of Mombasa in East Africa that made its contribution to the [Northern] corridor. He said that integrated transit mechanisms were opportunities to transform landlocked countries to land-linked countries. Stressing on the benefits, Mr. Vickers said that the costs could be divided between countries, such as infrastructure and fleet upgrades, through economic integration. He further added that it should be ensured that every country in the region benefit from economic integration, rather than benefits going to a few countries only.

Mr. Salamat Ali who also represented the Commonwealth Secretariat, UK, said that Pakistan had to move towards railway transportation from road transport, as railway was the cheapest mode of transportation. He further added that the government had taken various steps to improve the railway system of the country; however there was still a long way to go.

Mr. Nazir Kabiri, Advisor at the Ministry of Finance, Afghanistan, started on a positive note by saying that a number of 'green signals' had been given by the Government of Afghanistan in terms of economic activity, nonetheless the relations were still strained between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He added that political differences were not a major issue between the countries; rather it had more to do with the institutional capacity of the two countries. There was a misperception from Pakistan that Afghanistan was India-centric whereas, Central Asia misperceives that Afghanistan was Russia centric. He said that the atmosphere had become positive since the Pakistan Prime Minister, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif had taken over, as his government had a strong advocate of economic partnership between the two countries. He concluded by saying that Pakistan had a lot of potential and Afghanistan was aware of this potential. He maintained that the convergence between the civil-military leadership of Pakistan was a positive sign for the countries.

Mr. Khalid Malik from the Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, Pakistan, said we should adopt a strategic approach towards regional cooperation and development. He said that China was the largest trading partner of India, despite their differences. He added that a public-private partnership could be established for regional trade between South Asian countries.

He further added that investment must be done in order to improve infrastructure and contribute towards people's capacity building, and so far Pakistan had underinvested in both. He said that in order to reap maximum benefit from the opportunities, countries should take significant measures during the preparation process. He stressed that if one invests in people, they would look after the economy and society in the future. He concluded by citing the example of East Africa, saying that it opened its borders to the people, which helped in economic integration; the SAARC countries should take a lesson from them.
Dr. Khadija Haq, President, Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre, Lahore, Pakistan, while chairing the session, said that women were invisible at the economic front in most parts of the world and this invisibility had led to the low status of women in society. South Asia was a region that had progressed and had come a long way with regard to gender equality, education, health economy and political participation. In 1995 the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action prompted various governments to bring about institutional changes and enact laws to include equal representation of women. She said that in this regard it was very important to see progress, challenges and lessons learnt for the realisation of gender equality and women empowerment.

Dr. Haq said that in recent years, women empowerment in South Asia had achieved significant improvement in women’s access to education, health and economic opportunities. Girls' enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary level education had increased. Women's access to health care facilities, especially contraceptives, had improved along with an increase in female labour force participation rate.

Dr. Haq highlighted that women's participation in civil society, media, judiciary and national parliament had also risen. She said that the government had implemented laws preventing discrimination against women. The most vulnerable women were living in urban areas, urban slums, and often belonged to minority groups. Women's role in economic activities had increased. While women were involved economic activities, much of their contribution remained invisible as it was carried out in their households or in the government sectors. Dr. Haq said that the working women in South Asia were facing sub-standard working conditions, improper contractual employment and extensive working hours. Women in South Asia continue to face gender discrimination when it came to gaining access to educational opportunities and health care services.

Dr. Haq stated that women often faced pressure from the cultural, traditional and religious system, which was further enhanced by the institutional barrier that restricts their economic and social development. She said that South Asia had made significant progress in establishing institutional machinery to promote gender equality. This had resulted in the increased representation of women at the institutional
level politics, judiciary and administrative offices. She continued that women had attained powerful positions in the form of heads of the state and speaker of the National Assembly. Dr. Haq said that South Asia had also witnessed an increased role of civil society movement raising awareness about female empowerment and ensuring that pro women laws were properly implemented. She concluded that South Asia had seen a transformation in women’s legal rights in the last two decades. The region had rectified a convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Ms Shaista Pervaiz Malik, Member National Assembly (MNA), Government of Pakistan, talked about the role of SAARC and said that this association had the distinction of being the largest association of countries in terms of population size. She said that the objective of the SAARC was social and economic development of the countries at the regional and international level, which was not possible without the participation of women at various fronts. She said women empowerment had been the focus of her work as chairperson of SAARC Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs Council. She said women had a very critical role in every sphere of life but in South Asia they were facing a high degree of inequality at various stages of life and at work places. Even in this day and age, they had less opportunities and access to resources as compared to their male counterparts.

Ms Malik said that at the global and regional level, women entrepreneurs were being supported by all relevant quarters but still had a long way to go. Despite legislative development women entrepreneurs were continuously facing economic and social hardships across the region. Social and economic developments were interlinked because economic development results from social empowerment. Ms Malik said that women entrepreneurs had an immense potential to support the objectives of regional cooperation and integration in the SAARC. She stressed that South Asian growth cannot be realised and ensured without full participation of women and their economic activities. For this purpose women had to be very ambitious and had to take a giant leap forward in terms of developing an ecosystem to support the aspiring women entrepreneurs. Ms Malik said that as we all knew women had to face challenges for the registration and growth of their business; such as loans, networking and marketing for the business. To counter these issues at the regional level there were no projects which aim at real economic empowerment of women. She added that women were leaders by nature because they not only ran businesses but also raised families and supported communities. She said that as Secretary of Women Parliamentarians Caucus (WPC), she had taken steps for the reinforcement of laws related to women empowerment in Pakistan and over the years WPC had encouraged women legislators to work beyond political affiliation to ensure uplift of Pakistani women.

She said that WPC had organised national convention, roundtables, conferences and seminars on the pressing issues of Pakistani women by involving multiple stakeholders. She further suggested that women empowerment should be all encompassing covering both social and economic aspects. Women empowerment must begin with the special focus on educating and training of women for entrepreneurs to set up and run businesses. She said that private sector was the best place to provide equal opportunities to empower women entrepreneurs and that it should increase the number of employed women and invest
in their professional development. Last but not the least, she mentioned that political parties should ensure women's participation from less privileged segment of the society to participate in political activities.

Ms Dharshani Premaratne from the Institute of Policy Studies, Sri Lanka talked about the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Sri Lanka. She said Sri Lanka had performed positively to achieve MDGs such as reducing poverty, increasing literacy rate, and decreasing mortality rate in infants and mothers. But most importantly the indicators that were related to women had been improving very well especially the literacy rate in women in Sri Lanka was much higher and the maternal mortality rate had been decreasing impressively along with the infant mortality rate because of health education.

Ms Premaratne said that the socio-economic development indicators of the country, when compared to the other South Asian countries, it could be seen that the female labour force participation in Sri Lanka was at a very low level, that was 35%, and representation of women in the Parliament was also very low, which was 5%. She said that Sri Lanka had performed very well in education and health and also in gender equality indicator. She highlighted that although Sri Lanka had also been successful in achieving gender parity at all levels, higher than the literacy rate of men, yet the success in education and health was not visible in economic participation by Sri Lankan women and gender parity in labour force participation rate was very low at 46%.

Ms Premaratne said that women participation in labour workforce was low because of lack of adequate and affordable child care facilities and shortage of domestic helpers. Along with this, another reason that keeps women out of labour force in Sri Lanka was that women entrepreneurs' lack of access to finance because several credit resources required collateral of property, which women in this category did not find easy to meet. She further highlighted that there were other difficulties being faced by women entrepreneurs, such as access to market and access to proper training. This lack of access to skills development and training entrepreneurial skills was keeping women from becoming entrepreneurs. There were other hurdles also like legal and societal restrictions, not necessarily cultural but societal, like family responsibilities.

She wondered how to move ahead and address these challenges for women entrepreneurs by providing them with adequate skills or the formal education, professional or employment oriented skills. She said that to enter into labour force provision of affordable and secure child care facility was a must as it was holding back women who wished to enter into labour force and was also keeping them from being employed. She continued that there was a need to address issues such as access to business networking, market networking and information gathering and dissemination effectively to get women on board and help them realize their potential. She said that with effective participation of women in business networks and forums can highlight and bring up their issues and concerns and bring it to the next level to action plans. She concluded by saying that the efficient and effective training comprised of not just formal and skills development requirements but also addresses balance of one's social responsibility and employment potential.

Dr. Aisha Anees Malik from the Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan, talked about the Macro Indicator Based Empowerment Measurement Report. She said that it did not give an exhaustive picture on the status of women and there was a need to have these macro based empowerment measures substantiated with women's experiences within their immediate domains. She said that an excellent health care system in Sri Lanka did not guarantee women's inclusion in economic processes and in the same way parliamentary participation of women in Pakistan did not guarantee a better economic participation. Dr. Malik said that women's development especially through empowerment had been given a central place in the development discourse which could have an important shift in the development policy. She said in developing countries women were not being seen as victim of underdevelopment and as recipient of development aid, rather they were being recognised as agents of change. She posed the following questions at the session: what was actually empowerment? How was this empowerment achieved? How did we measure that women had actually benefited from development policies and that they had been empowered in some way?
Dr. Malik also shared statistics from the Global Gender Gap Index 2015 report and said that Pakistan had an overall ranking of 144 out of 145 countries. This report examined the gap between men and women in four basic categories i.e., economic participation and opportunities; education attainment; health and survival; and, political participation. Pakistan had consistently been in the last five countries from 2006 to 2015. Pakistan ranked 143 out of 145 countries in economic participation and 87th position in political participation. Sri Lanka had been the best performer in the region and Bangladesh was ranked 64th position this year. The report ranked Sri Lanka as number 1 in health and survival. She concluded by saying that Pakistan had to work for the betterment of women and they should be allowed to decide as to how they should be empowered and what they think their idea of empowerment should be.

Ms Rabia Manzoor from Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, while talking about the status of women said that the lives of the women in Pakistan had changed during the past 20 years. They were more empowered than they were ever before. More women were entering the workforce because of increased employment opportunities at all levels of economy. She continued that the literacy rate among women had increased and also raised public voice within and outside the political process. Ms Manzoor said that due to this situation, it seemed that women had become empowered but in reality women were still facing problems and discriminations at all levels; including harassment at workplaces.

Ms Manzoor reflected that generally women empowerment had three components: first, being a woman she should have self-respect and confidence at home; second, in a society she must have the right to control her own life; and, third, in the Pakistani context, a woman was empowered when she had property rights, land responsibilities and adequate share in business and job opportunities. Ms Manzoor said that in terms of social dimension the awareness was rising that a woman's social status should be equal to that of a man. Women empowerment in general in women's opinion was to have a respectable status in society and the courage to raise voice regarding their struggle. While talking about the political side, Ms Manzoor said that women were being empowered by reserving the seats in the national as well as provincial assemblies.

She said that political representation of women in Pakistan was higher than India, Iran and Sri Lanka. At the end of her presentation, she said that while formulating and implementing micro economic and social policies, the government should consult women at every level of policy making and should be given representation at all levels of the government and parliament. Furthermore, women should be given access to control over production resources such as credit and technology and adoption of measures to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women.
The session titled *Regional Cooperation on Disaster Risk Management in South Asia* on the second day of the Eighth South Asia Economic Summit was moderated by Mr. Shafqat Munir, Oxfam GB, Islamabad.

Dr. Athula Senaratne from the Institute of Policy Studies, Sri Lanka, said that South Asia was a disaster prone region. He mentioned that climate change was a major driver or a catalyst for disasters. Its sources could be natural or anthropogenic. He emphasised that there was a need for regional cooperation for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Perceiving others as rivals, competitors or as enemies undermines the prospects of cooperation in DRR. Dr. Senaratne said that we needed to raise cooperative behaviour for mutual gains and against mutual threats. It was need of the hour to alleviate mistrust and lack of confidence. While discussing regional cooperation, he mentioned that the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had played vital role in designing framework of disaster management especially in Sendai Framework for DRR.

Mr. Asish Subedi from South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal mentioned that in 2008 Oxfam estimated 2-6% of the gross domestic product (GDP) lost due to disasters every year. He said that disasters had greatly affected women, children, elderly and the disabled. In addition disasters also had an impact on resources and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) e.g. cyclone struck Bangladesh in 2007 and affected implementing the MDG 2 of achieving primary education, MDG 4 reducing child mortality and MDG 6 to combat HIV Aids and malaria.
Mr. Subedi said that disasters were trans-boundary in nature and SAARC countries were diverse in economy, size and capacity to cope with disasters. DRR had been mainstreamed into its poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) since 2005 in Bangladesh. After the 2005 Indian Ocean Tsunami, Disaster Management Acts were passed and National Disaster Management Authorities were created in several South Asian countries. He further discussed the areas of collaboration that SAARC should work on along with the other developing countries to ensure provision of technical and financial support to reduce disaster risks.

Mr. Kamble Mahesh, from the TATA Institute of Social Sciences, India, said that Disaster Management was an emerging field of science. He mentioned that the possibility of death due to disasters was 30 times more in poor countries than the developed ones and there was a 52% more possibility of getting affected by it. Mr. Mahesh said that the South Asia accounted for the 23% of the global population, which owned 1.3% of global wealth. He continued that 62% of this region did not have access to basic sanitation facilities. In South Asia, 40% of the poor people and half of the children younger than five years of age, were underweight, while 7% died before the age of five. Mr. Mahesh highlighted that due to lack of skilled personnel available for childbirth cases, India's maternal mortality rate was the second highest in the world. While focusing on financial disparity within Asia, he said that around 1% of super-rich in India held 49% of the total wealth.

The session deliberated on the need to consider strategic behaviour change in policies and to focus on creating economic model so that everyone could build resilience and could have access to security. SAARC countries had yet to fulfil their basic needs. Professor Usman Mustafa while giving concluding remarks at the session said that economists needed to emphasise on the needs of people along with the development plans. He also expressed the need to address urban planning through the lens of disaster risk management. Prof. Mustafa continued that disaster risk reduction was an emerging field, which demanded regional cooperation and scope for strategic behaviour to attract global funding and to decrease trans-boundary distances.

Session C-1:
Climate Change Adaptation and Migration in Semi-Arid and Mountainous Regions

Chair: Mr. Nisar A. Memon, Chairman, Water Environment Forum, Pakistan; and, Former Federal Information Minister & Senator, Islamabad, Pakistan

Special Remarks: Dr. Bernard Cantin, International Development Research Centre, Canada; and, Dr. Khatau Mal Thari, Tharparkar, Pakistan

Speakers:
Mr. Kashif Salik, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan, and Dr. Fahad Saeed, SDPI, Islamabad, Pakistan
Prof. Abdulhamid Kayumov, Tajik Branch of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC), Kazakhstan
Dr. Amina Maharjan, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Nepal; and, Dr. Giovanna Gioli, ICIMOD, Nepal

Panel Organisers: Mr. Kashif Majeed Salik, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan; and Dr. Anjal Prakash, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Nepal

Report By: Mr. Malik Haroon, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

Mr. Nisar A. Memon, Chairman, Water Environment Forum, Pakistan, and Former Federal Information Minister and Senator, Islamabad, Pakistan, brought to attention the effects of climate change and cited data from various sources to support his claims.

Referring to the statement by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) on global climate 2015, he said that globally the temperature was steadily rising and fourteen out of fifteen hottest years happened to be in the 21st century. He reflected that the same patterns of rising temperature had been observed in Pakistan.
He also talked about levels of carbon dioxide gas (CO2) in the atmosphere and the contribution of human beings in its rising levels. He revealed through data that due to human activities about 2 particles per million (ppm) CO2 gas was being added to the atmosphere every year.

He commented that every region is vulnerable to climate change in its own way and has its own weak spots. While giving out relevant examples he mentioned that the regions at sea level are at risk of intrusion of saline water in cultivated lands, which would be damaging for agriculture and food. The mountainous regions have their own vulnerabilities and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF) were getting commonplace, he noted.

He pointed out the potential risks for Asia due to climate change and listed flooding and the resulting damage to the infrastructure, heat-related mortality, and drought-related water and food shortages among such risks.

Mr. Memon brought to light the recurring floods in Pakistan since 2010 and mentioned the floods in Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, and Chitral in recent years as the catastrophes of climate change. Referring to a statement by the UN, he remarked that the floods of 2010 in Sindh were the greatest humanitarian crisis in recent history.

He observed that the security of South Asia is an integration of human security, natural resource security, institutional security and infrastructure security. All of these individual securities are interdependent on each other, he said.

He noted that in order to tackle climate change, we needed to set some tangible goals. He recommended the following goals: designing water, food and energy security policies and plans with specific reference to climate change; recognizing relevant risks and implementing mitigation and adaptation strategies; and, promoting long-term sustainability, conservation, and protection of natural resources.

Mr. Fahad Saeed and Mr. Kashif Salik, of Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), focused their discussion on “Climate-induced rural to urban migration in Pakistan”. They started their discussion by defining migration and mentioned that it depends upon certain push and pull factors. After defining it, they elaborated on types of migration, namely international migration and internal migration. “International migration,” they said, “refers to the movement of people from one country to another.” Giving out the definition for internal migration, they said, “Internal migration refers to the movement of people within a country.” Adding to the definition they noted, “Internal migration does not affect the population size but is the main factor of high population density of large cities. In internal migration rural-urban migration is on the increase.”

They proceeded with their discussion by presenting some facts and figures. Some of them were:

- a major proportion, almost 80%, of global migration was internal. Based on these trends, global urban population is estimated to rise to 59% by 2030. Earlier research on
migration focused exclusively on socioeconomic determinants, but more recent literature has examined migration in light of different causation, such as access to capital, finance, economic opportunities, governance, and environmental conditions.

They went on explaining migration in Pakistan’s context and presented some related information and data: rural-urban migration was profoundly changing the current system and society of Pakistan as a whole. The usual reason of rural to urban migration in Pakistan was failure to provide livelihood to the people in villages. In Pakistan, about one-fifth of the annual rise in urban population was associated with rural-urban migration. The 1998 census reported the urban population to be 32.5% of total population compared to 17% in 1947.

They analyzed and discussed the influence of climate change on migration. Presenting the results of their research, they said, “Heat stress not high rainfall, flooding, or moisture is most strongly associated with migration.” They further noted, “Agriculture income suffers tremendously when temperatures are extremely hot, wiping out over a third of farming income. Interestingly, high rainfall increases the source of income substantially,” they said. They proceeded with presenting more findings: “The magnitude and statistical significance of the estimates are most pronounced for the land-asset poor, and their moves are most likely to be out of the village.”

After presenting the findings, they treated the concept of climate modelling in detail.

At the conclusion of their discussion, they gave some recommendations based on the results of their research:

- Developing heat resilient varieties of wheat crop as they will not only help in ensuring the food and livelihood security, but also reduce rural-urban migration
- Establishing a National Registration System that can capture population mobility across Pakistan
- Reviving local governments under the 18th Constitutional Amendment to curb rural to urban migration
- Developing an integrated and multi-sectoral approach to climate-resilient economic development.

Dr. Amina Maharjan, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Nepal, discussed “Migration and adaptation in the context of climate change”. According to her research, “Increasing households in mountain areas are undertaking labour migration as an important livelihood strategy. Remittances are an important source of finance particularly at times of economic or environment shock/stress. It is possible to improve the adaptive capacities of the households through focused efforts in improving the overall capacities of the households.”

She laid down some approaches to increase the adaptive capacities of the migrant households, i.e. improving the financial capacities, improving the capacity of the migrant household to deal with disasters better, and diversifying the household income source.

Dr. Maharjan continued her discussion by focusing on the need of incorporating migration in climate change policy. She recommended a few measures: acknowledging the contribution of labour migration in the development of the households and communities, including migration in climate change adaption, and integrating climate change policy with other interrelated national policies.
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Prof. Abdulhamid Kayumov, Tajik Branch of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC), Kazakhstan, shed some light on the “Role of migration, remittances, and climate resilience in Tajikistan”. He presented the details and findings of his on-going research project. The duration of the project is September 2015 - December 2017. The goal of his project is to explore the role of migrants and remittances in the adaptation in semi-arid and arid regions under climate change.

He mentioned that Tajikistan is a mountainous country of Central Asia, bordering Afghanistan, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan. He further noted that Tajikistan has a varied climate from subtropical to Arctic zone and the main population lives on an equal footing, which is dry and hot. Citing some data he said that Tajikistan has seen very severe droughts covering the whole country from 1940 to 2008.

Referring to the analysis carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), he remarked that Tajikistan had seen the highest labour migration compared to the Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Liberia, and Tonga. He said that it had also seen the highest rate of remittance flows, which in 2013 amounted to approximately $4.1 billion or 49% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Dr. Bernard Cantin, International Development Research Centre, Canada, while giving his special remarks on climate change, said that the actual phenomenon of climate change and adaptation is complex. Pakistan is the fastest urbanizing country in South Asia. Temperature is increasing each year, especially, in those areas where poor population is residing with agriculture as the main occupation. He said that we were now inventing other new methods of wheat production that control the climatic effects on wheat production. Migration affects the remittance baskets within households, especially, in the mountainous regions. It is possible to improve the adaptive capacities of the households through focused efforts in improving the overall capacities of the households, stated Dr. Cantin.

Dr. Khatau Mal Thari, Tharparkar, said that they had consumed the stored bajra (millet) crops during the drought in Tharparkar. Moreover, child dropout is more in Tharparkar which is increasing child labour. Besides, child labour is also stimulated because of migration, he lamented.

At the end of the discussion, the renowned experts and speakers put forward some recommendations necessary to handle the issue. They included:

- Technical committee on environment should meet its short-term and long-term goals.
- Create a SAARC body to integrate and implement climate change strategy and plan.
- GLOF early warning systems should be installed in SAARC countries.
- Create SAARC environment fund and institute to undertake joint research projects for award of SAARC PhD degrees.
- Human mobility should not be considered as a threat in relation to climate change.
- Well-being was the major source of human mobility. There are opportunities to benefit from human mobility that can be facilitated by cross sectoral policies and better planning for urbanization.

Session C-2:
Rising Inequality in Asia and Role of Fiscal Policies to Reduce Inequalities

Chair: Dr. Hafiz A. Pasha, Former Federal Minister of Finance, Government of Pakistan
Special Remarks: Mr. Mustafa Talpur, OXFAM GB, Islamabad, Pakistan
Speakers:
Dr. M. Syeduzzaman, Former Finance Minister of Bangladesh
Ms Ayla Majid, Director, Business Advisory Services, Khalid Majid Rehman Chartered Accountants, Pakistan
Syed Abdul Khaliq, Executive Director, Institute for Social and Economic Justice (ISEJ)
Panel Organizers:
Mr. Mustafa Talpur, OXFAM GB, Islamabad, Pakistan; and, Ms Sadaf Liaquat, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
Report by: Mr. Fauqi Yousaf, National University of Sciences and Technology & Ms Bakhtawar Munir, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan
Inequality is rising dramatically in South Asia, and the situation is such that the bottom 20% of the population has access to 6-8% of the national resources, stated Dr. Hafiz A. Pasha, Former Finance Minister of Pakistan, while chairing the session. He also said that tax administration is the biggest challenge for Pakistan right now, and issues like tax evasion and corruption need to be solved urgently. He also talked about inequality in the education system and that girls' education needs special focus.

Dr. M. Syeduzzaman, Former Finance Minister of Bangladesh, said that South Asia faces issues of poor employment, increase in prices, unequal food distribution, and absence of credit and financial institutions for farmers. In order to reduce inequality, he said, “political will” plays a central role.

His recommendations to grapple with the exacerbating inequality included eliminating the fiscal resources on non-priority projects, prioritizing capital expenditures on human development, and focusing on increased exports.

Talking about tax collections, Ms Ayla Majid, Director Business Advisory Services, Khalid Majid Rehman Chartered Accountants, Pakistan, expressed concerns about the low proportion of tax collections from direct taxes, and that too little is being spent on human resources. She also endorsed the concept of reducing inequalities via quality education.

During her discussion, she put forward some recommendations necessary to handle the crisis of rising inequality including ensuring access to quality education, developing insurance systems at rural level, and creating a balance between direct and indirect taxes.

Syed Abdul Khaliq, Executive Director of Institute for Social and Economic Justice (ISEJ), stressed the severity with which inequality pervades the world. Referring to the statistics by OXFAM, he stated that by 2016, 1% will control more wealth than the rest of the 99%. He also mentioned that the inequality in the United States has reached its highest peak in 100 years. While the situation is precarious for the poor, the rich also are alarmed as the trickle-down theory of growth, he said. He talked about how the inequality has been exacerbating, particularly in Asia, despite phenomenal economic growth.

Revealing the direness of global inequality, he mentioned that 80 people own the same amount of global wealth as more than 3.5 billion people, and over 80% of the world’s population lives on less than $10 per day; the number of people living below 1dollar a day is 1.2 billion. Highlighting the plight of women and children, he said that 70% of the world’s poor are women, and 10 million children die of preventable causes each year.

He drew attention to the fact that largest corporations and banks today are bigger than most of the countries of the world: for instance, the revenues of Walmart are higher than the GDP of 157 countries.

It is imperative to address this issue because rising
inequality threatens not only social and political stability but also economic growth, he said. He noted that increasingly unsustainable wealth and income inequality are the inevitable consequences of unbridled capitalism, and eradicating poverty only requires $100 billion annually which is only 0.5% of the gross national income (GNI) of the Development Assistance Committee countries; total official aid is half of this amount.

Coming to the inequality existing in Pakistan, Mr. Khaliq referred to the Gini index which is a measure of economic inequality. He said that Pakistan stands out in Asia in inequality with a Gini index of 0.68, compared to India (0.48), Malaysia, (0.46), and China (0.51). He revealed that the number of out-of-school children is the second highest in the world; according to Alif Ailaan, there are 25 million boys and girls that are out of school. He also shared that Pakistan ranks third in a list of 167 countries where human slavery is most severe according to the Global Slavery Index 2014. While referring to the gender inequality in the country, he stated that Pakistan ranks last in women participation in the workforce among the SAARC countries, and stated that women own less than 3% of the land.

He remarked that social and economic costs of rising inequality are high as it is damaging social fabric, creating violence, and political instability. Speaking on rising inequality and role of fiscal policies in Pakistan, Mr. Khaliq underlined that total debt liabilities of the country stand at about Rs. 20,000 billion, and debt to GDP ratio is touching around 66.4%, while every Pakistani owes a debt of about Rs. 101,338 compared to this the per capita income of the country stands at Rs. 140,969 or $ 1,389.

He shared his view that on account of rising debt burden, economic and social rights could further be undermined in Pakistan due to lack of respect for human rights.

Shedding light on the inefficient taxation system of Pakistan, he said that around 1% population of the country is registered in tax system; government collects just 9% of country’s wealth in taxes, which is the lowest in the world. In Sri Lanka the ratio is 13%, and in India, it is 16%.

Mr. Khaliq remarked that the tax system in Pakistan in its current state is both inefficient and unfair: only 25% tax revenue is collected through direct taxes and the remaining 75% through indirect taxes. He noted that despite efforts by successive governments to reform the country's tax system since the early 1990s, the tax to GDP ratio has remained 9-13%, and in 68 years, five tax reforms commissions have been formed. He ascribed this low ratio in Pakistan to a number of inherent weaknesses in the tax system, including: inefficient tax administration, lack of adequate supporting systems, excessive scope for discretion and rent seeking behaviour, narrow tax base skewed structure, complex and non-transparent tax system, tax dodging, corruption, and informal structure of the economy. Due to an inefficient taxation system, he said, Pakistan does not have sufficient revenues to invest in decent public services and other development interventions — tax avoidance and evasion by companies means Pakistan loses much more than it receives in aid each year.

He discarded as a myth the notion that multinational corporations (MNCs) are the highest taxpayers. Backing his claim, he referred to the tax directory (2012-13) of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), according to which only 10 MNCs were among the top 20 taxpayers that paid 65% of Rs. 154.732 billion in taxes. He also pointed out that among the South Asian states, India collects a higher percentage of GDP (3.5%) from the corporate income tax than the Pakistan does (2.5%).

Bringing attention to the tax havens — countries that allow the highest level of client financial secrecy, tax evasion, and offshore accounts — he said that such havens allow the MNCs, and national and international elites to escape tax and regulation, which, in turn, is heightening inequality and poverty.
Mr. Khaliq, while concluding his talk, recommended some measures necessary to curb and lower the social and economics inequalities. He suggested exploring full tax potential, i.e. about Rs. 8-12 trillion, by introducing progressive taxation systems, minimizing the tax loopholes that enable corporations to drain millions of dollars – funds, which could be used to invest in public services, putting an end to tax incentive competitions among the poor countries, entrusting the parliament with the power of granting tax breaks/holidays/exemptions, reviewing all tax incentives for MNCs, making the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) autonomous, decreasing ratio of indirect taxation, thereby, increasing ratio of direct taxes, abolishing tax havens, and restituting Illicit Assets Act, implementing land reforms, and redistributing state lands, enforcing minimum wage, and terminating the privatization of strategic assets, providing free quality schooling till matriculation, also, promoting vocational skills centres, and raising public sector spending, i.e. prioritizing expenditures on education, health, public transport, low income housing, and utilities.

Mr. Mustafa Talpur, OXFAM - GB, Islamabad, while giving special comments lamented about low participation of women in South Asian politics and indicated that women face more poverty than men. During his talk, Mr. Talpur suggested some steps pivotal for reducing inequality. Some of the steps suggested by him included performing real cost-benefit analysis, and raising public expenditures on health and education, reducing gender disparity, encouraging low taxes on goods, and extending tax allowance to women.

Mr. Jamal Junjua, explained to the participants what AAWAZ – Voice and Accountability Programme was about. He said that the programme strives to strengthen stable, inclusive and tolerant democracy in Pakistan by following the Voice and Accountability Framework (active citizenship) to bring women and socially excluded groups in leadership and decision-making positions.

Ms Shirin Gul, Research and Policy expert, said the session was to demonstrate a proof of method for developing a single indicator to assess the quality of democratic dispensation. She highlighted four domains for measuring the index such as political, social cohesion, state response and gender.
Ms Fouzia Yazdani, gender expert at the UNDP, explained variables and relationship between voice and accountability. She defined accountability as a relationship between decision makers and which has impact on others. She also explained the ecology of voice and accountability. She stated that analysing voice needs to take into account factors like social fabric (attitudes and practices) and its cohesiveness to indicate the extent to which they are influential in certain groups or sections of society for being heard or otherwise and demand accountability. She defined voice as capacity of people to express their views and the ways in which they do so through a variety of formal and informal channels and mechanisms. She added that voice has intrinsic value of freedom of expression and enables communities to collectively arrive at standards against which power holders can be judged.

Mr. Minhaj ul Haq briefed the audience on the methodology and result of these rankings. He explained different dimensions in all four domains. For political domain, he indicated ‘voted in the last elections’, for social cohesion ‘trust on state for dispute pre-emption’, for gender ‘violence against women is reported’, and for state response ‘social sector performance’ were enlightened as indicators. Mr. Haq explained 16 districts from Punjab and KPK were covered with a total sample of 3,200 was drawn of which 2,176 was treatment and 1,024 was control. The areas covered under the above districts were Violence against Women, Women’s Political Participation, Social Cohesion and Dispute Pre-emption, Access to and use of Public Services, and Excluded Groups-Women and Minorities. While considering the domains he indicated Mandi Bahauddin was the highest ranked and D.G Khan the lowest.

Mr. Harris Khalique, Team Leader AAWAZ, commented that there are two challenges namely, ideological and methodological, and these challenges were the same that they found in Voice and Accountability Framework. He said that this study also highlighted those challenges. He said that ideological challenge is that we tend to separate social pluralism from economic inequality. He pointed out social pluralism and economic inequality are important to consider while discussing voice and accountability. Donor should invest in voice and accountability and at the same time methodological methods need to be improved. He commented that this kind of report shaped preconceived ideas about certain areas and certain group of people. He also added that marginalization cannot be addressed without highlighting economic inequalities. He stated that this study confirmed that we need to invest in the demand side of voice and accountability programmes. At the same time the model needs some improvement and dimensions of political economy have to be brought into methodology or in the planning phase, he added.

Mr. Amir Goraya, Governance Specialist UNDP, Islamabad, stated that improvement in service delivery may not increase level of confidence in the government. He pointed out that there are some districts that are adjacent to each other but different in ranking; for example Mandi Bahauddin is top ranked and Sargodha was the second last.
He stated that these district rankings were good in the way of policy. He wondered how much we are looking on supply side in this Voice and Accountability Framework. He raised the questions with regard to perceptions about district government and local bodies or about provincial governments. He mentioned that in order to inform the policy, the methodology should be designed in a way where one could generate recommendations for specific issues. He also mentioned this study reflects poor confidence of citizens on state due to poor service delivery. He highlighted that it is very difficult for citizens to relate to public departments particularly in case of any justice. He stated that there is a need to focus on economic factor while analysing citizens perceptions.

Mr. Naeem uz Zafar, Member Social Sector, Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms, while chairing the session appreciated AAWAZ team for conducting these district rankings. The demand for better service delivery should come in the form of voice, he commented. He also commented that there is a need to revisit the research design especially for those areas which are known for violence against women particularly in the south. He suggested that there should be a process where people can share their concerns about the performances of the government on different aspects. There should be feedback on these kinds of voices, he emphasized.

Session C-4
Food Security in Pakistan: Current Situation and the Way Forward

Chair: Mr. Seerat Asghar Jaura, Ministry of National Food Security & Research, Government of Pakistan
Speakers:
Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
Dr. Golam Rasul, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) Kathmandu, Nepal
Mr. Malik Zahoor, Zero Hunger and Family Farming Program, Pakistan
Mr. Patrick Evans, Food and Agriculture Organization, Islamabad, Pakistan
Mr. Aslam Gill, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Government of Pakistan
Ms Lola Castro, World Food Programme, Islamabad, Pakistan
Dr. Krishna Pahari, World Food Programme, Islamabad, Pakistan
Panel organizers: Dr. Krishna Pahari, World Food Programme, Islamabad, Pakistan; and, Ms Rabia Manzoor, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
Report By: Ms Nageen Sohail & Ms Samar Asad, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri started the session by deliberating upon the new dimensions related to food security in South Asia. He stated that the provision of food to every individual is the obligation on the state and highlighted the main reasons for food insecurity i.e. bad governance and unequal distribution of food. After discussing the position of Pakistan in the global hunger index (which is lower than that of India and Afghanistan), he referred to the report from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which showed reduction of food in secured people from 48.7 million people to 44.4 million during 1990-2015. However, increase in food wastage was also reported from 41.6% to 43%. He then referred to the National Nutrition Survey (2011) which reported that nearly 58.1% families are food insecure and barely 3% children receive a proper nutritious diet. He stressed on coordinated response by mentioning that the
climate change commission had set up a high court in which 6 out of 18 actions were meant for the coordination between provincial and federal governments, academia, research organizations and other secondary sources for data. He stressed upon the portion of GDP provided for food security issues, current approach towards it, and the need to invest in improved variety and awareness-raising among the community.

The reasons for the improved situation of farmers abroad include subsidies, latest technologies, chemical supplies, etc. While in Pakistan there are packages like Kisan packages which are reasonable yet not sufficient to meet the demand of farmers. There is a need to point out the food insecurity vulnerability zones as well.

Dr. Krishna Pahari from the World Food Programme, Islamabad, presented a study about evolving trends of climate change and food security in which hotspot areas were identified after selection of climate sensitive agro ecological and livelihood zones. An extensive review of the existing literature and data related to national and provincial data resulted in mapping of vulnerability profiles and maps in which change in annual rainfall patterns had been observed which later on led to programming and preparedness. The vulnerability is determined by exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity of those zones. Those livelihoods were indicated by the primary and secondary occupations, ownership of assets, farm size and migration opportunities.

Although the study was based upon people at home, yet migrants were also given importance. FATA was considered where the rate of migration is the highest which has resulted in lower agricultural yield in comparison to the last ten years. The reason might be their economic instability and lack of regular jobs. Some 44% of the households suffered from calorific consumption storage and took loans even to meet their basic needs in which women faced the worst situation of all. He suggested that improving this situation can result towards sustainable development.

Dr. Golam Rasul from the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Nepal, discussed the relation of food with water and energy by showing nexus between SDGs and encountered challenges and output of Pakistan. He appreciated the progress made by Pakistan in the last two decades in the food sector. He pointed out that Pakistan is one of the water scarce countries in which approximately 75% of water is drawn from both surface and ground reservoirs leading to more energy requirement. He suggested changes in dietary habits and lifestyles of people by 2030. Population growth and urbanization requires increase in food production by 2%. He proposed that in order to ensure sustainable food production; there is a need to ensure sustained supply of food, energy and water as given in the figure.

He further emphasized on the need to integrate polices to minimize the trade-offs and increase collaborations among public and private sector at multiple levels. Also there is a need to harmonize public policies, align incentives, and encourage investments to solve the issue of food insecurity, he stated.

Mr. Patrick Evans from the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations, Islamabad, discussed the need for national census (which is expected in 2016) to calculate the current problem of food insecurity. He stressed on the action of government to make effective plans for the efficient distribution and availability of sustainable resources required for the provision of food to every individual as food production per hectare in Pakistan is lower than the other countries, which needs to be improved.
Dr. Aslam Gill from the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Government of Pakistan, said that achieving food security and nutrition is the high priority of the Government which is working to set a baseline on the food security indicators at the national and provincial levels. He said that the issue of food security is quite complex as it has deep roots in political, social and climate change dimensions. He described the transition in prices over the years and pointed to the issues faced by farmers as well who do not even get their invested money back. Hence poor farmers remain poor regardless of their high input in agriculture. He then discussed the upcoming government project for collection of data which would cover all the aspects of food security including stakeholders, farmers, scientists, bureaucrats and policy makers, etc.

Ms Lola Castro from the World Food Programme, Islamabad, stressed on the SDGs 2015 which have been designed to meet the demands of 800 million people still facing hunger around the world. There is food but no proper distribution due to which 800 million people are still food insecure. Millions of children are still unhealthy. She stressed on sustainable food system and initiatives by the government to increase productivity. Her concluding remarks expressed FAO's desire to buy food from Pakistan but the high cost does not allow this to happen.

She lamented that 3 billion metric tonnes of food is annually wasted and proposed that proper management can result in feeding all the hungry people around the globe. Yearly, 30%-40% of the total food is wasted due to poor storage and natural disasters which can resolve food insecurity within Pakistan. She appreciated the work currently being done in Pakistan to overcome it.

To further highlight the work being done in the food security sector, Dr. Suleri asked a private entrepreneur Mr. Imran about his contribution. He highlighted the condition of poor farmers and the annual wastage of food which is about 4-5 billion dollars. He believed that we do not need extra sources to overcome our problems. We only need to utilize our already existing resources to gain valuable products.

Mr. Muhammad Zahoor critically described the role of the Government of Pakistan on the food security issue and the lack of implementation of policies being devised. He attributed the unstable bureaucracy and political shifts as the hurdles in dealing with the issue of food insecurity. He suggested involving stakeholders at all levels and being honest with them. He also raised questions about our recent progress in agriculture. He accepted the bitter reality that agriculture has been ignored in the past and is still not given much importance as it should be. He proposed that inspiration should be taken from the politicians around the world who have ensured progress in agriculture sector with proper consultation and management. He ended his discussion by saying that food security programmes which are initiated using foreign funding cease functioning when the funding stops and that is why post project sustainability should be given importance at the inception stage. With reference to the theme of the Conference, he said that poverty leads to extremism so in order to eliminate extremism we need to eliminate poverty first.

Various questions were asked from the panel regarding effective distribution and wastage of food per year in relation to the constant increasing population. While answering a question regarding productivity of cash crops in Pakistan, Ms Castro said that international market is interested in buying food from Pakistan but the cost of production is too high for anyone to achieve maximum profit and stable economy. Therefore sustainable use of resources is essential for Pakistan in order to reduce this production cost. Dr. Mahmood Khawaja from SDPI commented that there is a need to ensure post sustainability of the projects at inception. A journalist from India commented that the issue of agricultural loans is also dominant in India and stressed on collective steps for the benefit of the region.

While thanking the fellow panellists, Dr. Suleri concluded by saying that the public and private sectors should work in harmony with each other for the effective implementation of policies.
Dr. Imran Khalid started his presentation by reviewing the water resource governance in Pakistan. He gave an estimate that Pakistan would become water scarce by 2030 or earlier. He said that the length of the Indus Water Basin is 2900 km, and that the Indus Water treaty was signed in 1960 to resolve the issues of water distribution between the two nations. Indus Basin Irrigation system is the largest worldwide, covering 15 million hectares, and is the largest infrastructure enterprise in Pakistan's economy and is worth 300 billion US dollars. This irrigation system is estimated to be contributing 18 billion dollars to the annual GDP of Pakistan making 21% of it. Various dams, canals and barrages are built over it so that the areas previously being irrigated by Ravi, Bias, and Sutlej could be irrigated by the water of Indus Basin. But it has its limitations as its efficiency is only 40%. Dr. Khalid gave definition of governance and said that it has a very important role to play in water variability.

Dr. Guy Jobbins, Overseas Development Institute, London, UK, explained that if we have bad knowledge of water resources, we probably would not know how to use them. An example is that most of our water is used for the irrigation purposes, whereas people's drinking water needs are not met properly. As population is increasing, water demand is also increasing. Although technical side of water management is important, political side also needs consideration. An example would be the institutional mechanisms that provide various compensations to farmers during times of drought, such as loans, free stock, and many others. He considered climate variability to be more problematic than climate change emphasizing the need to learn lesson from our previous mistakes. We need to understand that water variability affects governance and economy of any nation, he emphasized.

Ms Simi Kamal, Aurat Foundation, Islamabad, Pakistan, showed her optimism by saying that if some political and economic issues are resolved then the situation would become way better, and for resolving our issues, we need to be self-sufficient and just not be looking up to donors. There is a need to store water and repair present infrastructure...
because when the water seeps down and gets added to the ground water, energy needs to be applied to get that water out. She said that climate change is a global challenge, and has its impacts on all parts of Pakistan as well, so we need to understand that there are parts other than Indus Water Basin as well which need attention. People in water scarce areas of Pakistan have learnt to live with very little water, and we need to learn from them to use water efficiently to conserve it. Our rivers are empty, whereas canals are full, showing that most water is used for irrigation, but people’s needs are not being met. She gave the example of people of Thar, appreciating that the idea of water distribution there where wells are allotted to each family. If someone’s well becomes empty, he would not take water from someone else’s well, as he considers it to be someone else’s property.

Ms Kamal considered climate change to be a long lasting phenomenon, making this 21st century to be the warmest ever century. Although effects of climate change on change in sea level and various other phenomenon are known, its effect on surface and ground water is not well understood. We need to conserve water, she emphasized, saying that we use more water than is actually needed by us, thus wasting it. She suggested that water rights should be separated from land rights as it would help solve many problems. There is a need to revive our older traditions of water sharing. There should be water entitlement, she said, as it would help people to feel equal, and when people feel equal, they share resources, helping conserve them, she stressed.

Dr. Kullar Subbmanyam Murali, International Development Research Center (IDRC), New Delhi, India, said that there are different levels where water is captured, and it is taken out through various traditional techniques, which are least costly. He quoted Anil Agarwal’s ‘Divine Wisdom’, which says that mechanisms of water usage and harvesting are best in the Indian region, and are managed by the local people even though India has a vast semi-arid region. In the region of South Asia, India was the first to think of water management, and water conservation mechanisms, long before the idea of climate change arrived. He considered the floods prior to rainy season to be more problematic, as people do not have enough knowledge and capacity to deal with them. Such floods are considered by many people to be a result of climate change. During 2006-2007, India adopted its first climate change action plan, which addressed sustainable agriculture and water, and also presented responsive plans towards droughts.

The chair, Mr. Sham ul Mulk, emphasized the need to build institutional capacity to deliver, which requires good plans and good staff. It has always been in the interest of politicians to destroy the capacity of institutions to deliver. Earlier, occurrence of climate change was doubtful, that it may occur or not, but now, we are in the middle of it, he warned. An indication of it is the floods of 2010 in Pakistan, which were the most disastrous in 10,000 years. To tackle with it, the governance structure must get aware of it. He quoted the slogan of an organization, ‘more crop per drop’, saying that this concept needs to be applied in order to conserve water and sustain it for future generations.

The session concluded with the remarks that steps need to be taken to protect our people, at the same time saving agriculture as increase in temperature means more diseases. Although Pakistan has a framework document for climate change, no policy or action has ever been made and implemented; there is also a lack of sectoral, provincial and federal policies; and, a lack of coordination between various concerned departments. Thus there is a need for fixing governmental and political systems and policies. Water political economy needs special consideration, thus engineers should also be brought to the forefront for solution of various problems. There is a need to deal with water as if it is someone else’s property, and to use it efficiently in order to conserve it.
Mr. Shakeel Ahmad, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), said that social spending at the local level which could benefit the poor marginalized people was directly proportional to the improved outcome of all social sector indicators, thus uplifting the life standards in the community in general. Furthermore he said that while currently the provinces’ chief ministers have the discretion on spending, however, it should be based on Human development Index (HDI) or Multi-Poverty Index (MPI) so that each district could get an equal chance of developing and progressing. There has been a huge financial management issue in Pakistan. Public spending on social services and poverty reduction has not been increased in the past years as it should have. Even the National Finance Commission (NFC) award could not produce the desired outcomes as there was no significant difference in the condition of provinces before and after NFC, he said.

After a careful analysis by Mr. Ahmad, some key problematic areas were highlighted. Pakistan faced capacity issues as a country and had meagre resources. However, the capacity to spend those resources was even a greater issue. Allocated budgets for social services and poverty reduction could not be fully spent. Even the budget which was spent did not result in improved conditions. This could be due to the reason that spending was not done on the right things at the right time and in a proper way. This problem highlighted the issue of targeting for public spending. There was no systematic plan that could guide the government to target different problems with right resources, proper planning and on a timely basis. Another problem was disconnect between the poor masses and the government spending plan, and differentiation between income and non-income poverty.

Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Tariq Banuri, University of Utah, USA, said that the government had to achieve zero poverty to make the country grow sustainably and to do that the government must succeed in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In order to keep our goals achievable we have to bring down the population growth to a manageable rate, he recommended. He also spoke on the lack of labour rights. He suggested universal access to education, water and sanitation for the purpose of inclusive and sustainable development.
Dr. Banuri stated that there was a much lower investment on social capital which was necessary to shape the quality and quantity of collaborations in a society. He also talked about adding a valuable mechanism for economic growth. He stressed on the investment in social, human and financial capital for the improvement in human development while physical capital would be the outcome of all these investments.

He was of the view that without justice there would be no prosperity. Therefore, the prevalence of justice in the system was a prerequisite to human development and prosperity in a society.

Globalization can lead to growth, not equity, he added. That was why the policies must be more focused on poverty reduction. Government probably had failed in effective service delivery and was incapable of managing resources, he lamented. Public spending was ineffective due to many issues like complicated funds disbursement system, lower allocation and spending on development expenses, under-spending and late disbursement of funds, etc. In the same way, revenue collection was also inefficient and required a lot of crucial reforms. Lastly, he strongly recommended the public spending in social services which was a key to eradicating poverty.

Dr. Kaiser Bengali, Government of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan, said that Pakistan had become a severely inequality state where the elite lived in a totally different world than the poor. To bring about this change, a proper land reform and toppling of feudal system was necessary. Currently, lack of proper land reforms was a hindrance along with lack of easy access to land to start an industry and establishment of industrial zones in Pakistan.

He spoke about the provision of productive employment in South Asia. He highlighted some of the major issues in this regard including high cost of production, lack of infrastructure, energy, and deteriorating law and order conditions.

He suggested that the government should reduce inequality to promote inclusive growth. Moreover, he stressed on the effective land market regulations that was necessary to enhance investment in Pakistan.

Chairing the session, Dr. Shoaib Sultan Khan, Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), Islamabad, said that the basic purpose of RSPNs working at the local level was to enable the poor marginalized people to stand on their own feet by helping each other in community. This success had now been shared throughout the South Asian region. To achieve stable development, there was a need for a third pillar besides administration and political pillars, a socio-economic pillar that could function at the community and household level.

Dr. Shekhar Shah, National Council of Applied Economics Research, New Delhi, India, said that human development was a real challenge in South Asia. Creating productive employment was the need of the hour in this perspective. India had to produce a million jobs for the existing demographic dividend that would turn into a demographic disaster otherwise.

He lamented that female participation rate in South Asia was low. He informed the audience about the transition of Indian economy from agriculture to industrial. Hence, the layoff of unskilled labour force was increasing as the industrial sector required skilled labour force. That was a possible reason behind the increasing unemployment rate. Increased investment in skill development by the government and private sector would be a solution to this issue, he proposed. Lastly, he emphasized on the creation of employment opportunities and enhanced social safety net.
The session on South Asian Women Parliamentarians for the Rights of Women was a roundtable closed-door panel. It was moderated by Ms. Mome Saleem of Heinrich Boll Stiftung, Islamabad, Pakistan. Women parliamentarians from India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan participated in the session which was opened with a presentation based on a joint study by Dr. Andrea Fleschenberg and Dr. Farzana Bari titled *Unmaking Political Patriarchy through Gender Quotas? – Comparing Afghanistan and Pakistan*. The following key points were discussed in the presentation:

**Afghanistan's Trajectory Towards Democracy**

Afghanistan's post-2001 trajectory was primarily marked by the experience of a continued international intervention with ambivalent implications for the state and institution-building. Afghanistan's democracy in the making was characterised by:

- Fragmented elites, absence of political parties and consolidated political institutions.
- Overshadowing insurgency and security challenges.
- High levels of corruption along with powerful, violent and often misogynist power brokers inside and outside political institutions.
- Nascent and precarious, widely donor dependent civil society and women's movement with limited societal outreach.

**Session C-7:**

**South Asian Women Parliamentarians for the Rights of Women**

**Moderator:** Ms. Mome Saleem, Heinrich Boll Stiftung, Islamabad, Pakistan

**Panel Organisers:** Ms. Mome Saleem, Heinrich Boll Stiftung, Islamabad, Pakistan; and, Mr. Shakeel A. Ramay, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

**Speakers:**

Dr. Farzana Bari, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan; and, Dr. Andrea Fleschenberg dos Ramos Pinéu, Islamabad, Pakistan

*Presentation: Unmaking Political Patriarchy through Gender Quotas – Comparing Afghanistan and Pakistan*

Ms. Veena Sikri, South Asia Women’s Network (SWAN), India

Ms. Rukhsana Jamshed Butt, Member National Assembly, Pakistan

Ms. Shinkai Karokhail, Women Parliamentary Network and Women Caucus in Parliament, Afghanistan

Ms. Shah Gul Rezai, Member Parliament, Afghanistan

Ms. Shaista Malik, Chairperson, SAARC Chamber of Commerce Women Entrepreneurs Council (SCWEC); and, Member National Assembly, Pakistan

Ms. Arfa Khalid, Member National Assembly, Lahore, Pakistan

Dr. Shahida Rehmani, Member National Assembly, Sindh, Pakistan

Ms. Maliha Khan, Member Provincial Assembly, Lahore, Pakistan

Ms. Aisha Syed, Member National Assembly, Pakistan

Ms. Nikhat Shakeel, Member National Assembly, Pakistan

Mrs. Saman Jafri, Member National Assembly, Pakistan

**Report by:** Mr. Waqas Anwar, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
Endangered post-2001 gender achievements, which might become once again a bargaining chip of political transition, be it via peace negotiations and/or power sharing agreements.

Quota provisions in place are a result of that very international intervention and have generated the following key experiences:

- Gender quotas are generally accepted by civil society and many key political stakeholders albeit continued resistance from a significant number of male MPs and government officials.
- Women aspire for political leadership roles and participation at various levels of the polity.
- Women’s political performance so far is of a mixed track record in terms of legislative work, government oversight and constituents’ representation, but generally more acknowledged than that of male colleagues.
- The nature of electoral politics and political culture allowed only a very limited number of women parliamentarians to build a sustainable constituency and become part of the political mainstream.
- Electoral politics and institutional proceedings are marked by a high level of volatility and hybrid political institutions, leading to ambiguity and constant renegotiation of legislative agency and performance.
- Inroads in terms of space and agency carved out by women MPs remain precarious, contested and in need of outside solidarity and support.

Pakistan’s Trajectory Towards Democracy
Pakistan’s trajectory towards democracy was characterised by the following features:

- Elite capture.
- Military interventions.
- Lack of democratic roots of key political institutions due to feudalism, dynastic politics, lack of intra-party democracy and patriarchal institutional cultures; combined with weak, fragmented social movements, in particular to the women’s movement suffering from NGO-isation; further exacerbated by an increase in religious orthodoxy and extremism.

Quota provisions in place are problematic, as an indirect selection for reserved seats takes place by the male leadership of parliamentary political parties, generating the following key experiences:

- Greater number of women are aspiring for political leadership roles and participation at various levels of the polity.
- There is a high level of legislative performance of female MPs as compared to male colleagues. Gender quota politicians’ performance was better in legislation than in government oversight and constituents’ representation.

After the presentation, the session participants were divided into thematic working groups. The groups highlighted the following points:

Climate Change, Women’s Rights and Policies (Group Work)
Key Challenges for parliamentarians

- No education on climate change and lack of interest on behalf of parliamentarians;
- Stakeholders should be taken on board; and,
- Women parliamentarians are not allocated funds.

Ms Arfa Khalid highlighted the important points of the discussion in context of climate change, women’s rights and policies:

- Energy is an international issue and help is needed from international lobbies to address it;
- Funds should be allocated to women parliamentarians for the required initiatives;
- International law regarding environment should be structured;
Youth should be engaged in tree plantation;
Western countries are contributing more towards industrialization;
Afghanistan needs to show commitment to strengthen women parliamentarians; and,
Nepal is taking measures to improve the environment by engaging its people in healthy and organic farming.

**Women’s Perspective on Regional Peace-building (Group Work)**
- Sharing best policies based on root cause across the region;
- Women play a crucial role in regional peace building; and,
- Women are the primary victims of all natural disasters and poor economic conditions but they are not part of peace-building process.

**Key challenges:**
- Lack of political will and commitment;
- Administration head of commissions are determined by mafia;
- Security issues and rise of new radicalism; and,
- Women do not have direct quota system.

Ms Veena Sikri highlighted the following points in the context of Women’s Perspective on Regional Peace-building during the discussion:
- Women play a crucial role in peace-building;
- Women-centric process should be adopted; and,
- Men should be brought on board to speak for women’s rights.

**Fighting Corruption in Electoral Politics – Gendered Vulnerabilities and Concerns (Group Work)**
Mrs. Saman Jafri highlighted the following points during discussion in context of Fighting Corruption in Electoral Politics – Gendered Vulnerabilities and Concerns:
- Lack of decision making;
- Role of media is very important to highlight corruption factor of parliamentarians; and,
- Women parliamentarians should have an advocacy group.

The groups came up with the following recommendations:
- The Women Parliamentarian Caucus (WPC) and Women Parliamentarian Network on national as well on regional levels (South Asia) should be formed;
- There should be a monitoring committee on women parliamentarian issues;
- Men parliamentarians should speak for women parliamentarians (He-for-She) approach is required;
- National policy for women parliamentarians should be formed;
- Law and sanctioning bodies of women parliamentarian should be formed; and,
- Need to advocate people for women parliamentarian’s higher level of socio-cultural acceptance at national and constituency levels.
At this panel, energy experts discussed the energy security and sustainable energy in Pakistan through improvement in energy governance and also suggested ways on how to exploit indigenous energy resources in Pakistan.

Engr. M.A. Jabbar, Member SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Karachi, Pakistan, in his opening remarks introduced the speakers and their expertise before the audience. Engr. Jabbar was of the view that the concept of efficiency of power plants has become a concrete issue in the power corridors of Pakistan. He stressed upon placement of professionals in the energy institutions and further told the audience that during Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf regime, this issue was also taken up before him a number of times. He urged that analysis of cost benefit ratio of energy projects through CEPEC needs to be carried out.

Dr. Shaukat Hameed Khan, Coordinator General, COMSTECH, Islamabad, Pakistan, gave a detailed presentation about major factors affecting energy security including energy mix, capacity versus actual generation, electricity benchmarks/ efficiency, global mix, energy sources in Pakistan, Thar Lignite Coal, increase in coal plant efficiencies, reduced GHGs, nuclear power, Pakistan and India comparison, energy-water-food nexus, energy and water and 'lost' gas, trans-border imports, South Asian energy cooperation, existing biogas plants in Pakistan, opportunity for local industry, etc.

He highlighted that Thar Lignite Coal is spread over 9100 KM in Pakistan. Heat value of local coal is 7000 BTU/lb which is better than Indian and German coal. Efficiency of existing power plants can be enhanced up to 50%. High costing power plants need to be converted into coal, he said. Rehabilitation cost is roughly 30% of the new plant which is better instead of purchasing a new one. He informed the participants that generation cost of nuclear power is much less than the other sources of fuel input like gas, RFO and HSD. Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) has recently announced to add 40,000 MW in the system by 2050 through nuclear energy. However, he also highlighted the problems with nuclear power. Pakistan has independent regulator for nuclear energy but India has no regulator. Similarly a number of serious accidents occurred in India.
whereas Pakistan nuclear energy plants are safe from accidents.

He stressed the need for construction of more dams for sustainable energy and food security. He urged to introduce new technology in agriculture like laser land leveller through which water can be saved up to 30%. Best choice for energy cooperation is with some of the West Asian and Central Asian countries, he said.

Mr. Arshad H. Abbasi, Senior Advisor, Water & Energy, SDPI, highlighted on the Shale Gas resources in Pakistan and informed the participants that by development of unconventional gas and by tapping this indigenous resource, 750,000 jobs can be created annually thus addressing the unemployment issue in Pakistan. He also talked about the present oil prices in the international market and advised the NEPRA to give benefits of low price of oil to the consumers by reducing tariff.

Dr. Gulfaraz Ahmed, former Secretary Petroleum, gave a detailed presentation and briefed the audience that energy security is directly related to economic stability and national security. He presented a comparison of Pakistan's energy security mix and energy intensity of 2002 with different regional and global countries and highlighted Pakistan's energy challenges. He pointed towards the following challenges:

1. Low energy consumption per capita (1/5th of World average): low generation of wealth, low development and endemic poverty
2. High energy intensity: low efficiency of converting energy into wealth/GDP – energy intensive industry, inefficient appliances
3. Dependence on imported oil: low exports resulting in balance of payment issues
4. 36% high cost electricity generated by oil affecting export competitiveness
5. Increasing gap between demand and supply affecting energy security and further slowing down economic growth by 3%
6. Excessive transformation/transmission/distribution losses and theft and non-payment of bills compounded by poor governance
7. Lack of vision, coherent policy, integrated strategy and efficient management in the absence of an overarching ministry of energy

Dr. Asma Samir Khwaja presented her talk on the role of Shale Gas for energy security in Pakistan and its comparative analysis with the import of LNG. She pointed out that 70% area of Pakistan is covered by Shale Gas. Pakistan has 586 trillion cubic feet of shale gas out of which 105 trillion cubic feet is technically recoverable with current technology. Shale Gas has the potential to generate economic activity, provide cost effective energy supply and bring investment, she said. She concluded by emphasizing that Shale Gas can ensure energy security. “Energy independence by achieving self-sufficiency through optimum use of Shale Gas would be a viable solution to energy security,” she said.

Engr. Maariyah Wasim, Energy Analyst, SDPI, gave a detailed presentation on Energy Security and Efficiency of Thermal Plants. She also presented the details of Pakistan's coal reserves.

Her presentation was based on:
- Energy Security- HELE-SE4ALL
- Existing energy resources: challenges and opportunities
- Shift in energy mix
- Energy crisis
- Shortfall projections-pipelines
- Import of LNG
- Multi-purpose hydropower projects
- Shale Gas
- Potential of coal
- Thermal power plants and their efficiency
- Impact on tariff
- Carbon emissions

Mr. Tahir Bashrat Cheema, former M.D. PEPCO, Lahore, while talking about energy security highlighted the facts about the energy crisis including some weak areas like poor energy governance and lack of political commitment to address the issue.
Mr. Muhammad Saleem Ashraf shared with the audience that cotton is an essential crop strengthening national economy accounting for 1.5% in GDP and 7.1% in agricultural value addition. He was discussing his paper titled ‘Climate change and cotton supply chain: Conundrum in Pakistan’. Pakistan produced 9.5 million of cotton bales in the year 2013-2014. However, China remained at the top by producing 32.8 million bales. Other major producers include India, US, Brazil, Uzbekistan and Australia. Largest cotton importers in the same duration were China (14.1 million bales), Turkey (4.2 million bales), Bangladesh (4.1 million bales), Vietnam (3.2 million bales) and Indonesia (3 million bales). Major upset in production output fall-in was observed in China, the world's largest producer since 1982. Reasons behind this fall were utilization of labour intensive technologies, rising subsidies, landholding limit and climatic variability. India is expected to replace China as the world's largest cotton producer by 2017 with continuous implementation of new and traditionally prevailing technologies to capture currently unrealized yield potential, he informed the audience. According to his research, climate change will probably bring considerable change in the hydrological cycle. The severity of droughts and the intensity of floods are likely to increase and the quantity of available runoff will decrease. His research areas included district and tehsil Muzaffargarh. Respondents had minimum 2 acres and maximum of 35 acres of land whereas total area under cultivation was 9.95 acres (mean). Out of this total land area, under cotton cultivation was 1 acre (minimum) and 30 acres (maximum) in the areas of Muzaffargarh. Some 61% respondents said that there was increase in temperature whereas 48% believed that this was destined by God. Some 87% cotton growers believed that there was in increase in flower shedding, 91% mentioned reduced bale size. Other climate change impacts include heat stress (83%), bud shedding (74%), water logging (58%) and pests attack (31%). Mr. Saleem Ashraf told the audience that 100% respondents agreed for cultivation of insect and pest resistant varieties in order to cope with the climate change issues. Other respondents were in favour of gap filling to maintain plant population, proper irrigation, and reduced cotton cultivation area, proper use of chemicals and adoption of diversified cropping pattern like intercropping. Cotton growers were asked about issues regarding climate change mitigation and respondents complained that there was no crop insurance (88%), non-availability of heat resistant varieties (89%), lack of education (76%) and unawareness (79%). Mr. Ashraf forecast that by the year 2020 cotton production in Pakistan would be 14,278 bales (822 kg/ha). He suggested that farmers need heat resistant
varieties. Role of ag-extension should be more focused on disseminating awareness about climate change, he added. Adaptation of diversified cropping pattern should be promoted. Government should introduce crop insurance schemes for the growers who had been and are endangered to natural calamities like floods. In addition to this, government should make sure that certified seed and pure chemicals are easily available. He also suggested that genetically modified crops can also add to the production level of cotton in Pakistan.

Dr. Elizabeth Carabine presented a paper via Skype on 'Pathways to resilience in semi-arid economies'. She told the audience that around 1 billion people are living in semi-arid lands globally. In developing countries, semi-arid areas are suffering from relatively low economic growth, high levels of poverty, limited access to markets, low productivity, water shortages and insufficient infrastructure issues. While discussing the vision of PRISE project, she said that it is a five-year, multi-country research project that generates new knowledge about how economic development in these semi-arid regions can be made more inclusive and resilient to climate change. Climate change and other drivers present major challenges to semi-arid areas, which suffer from relatively low levels of economic development, she added. PRISE partners are working in the UK, Pakistan, Senegal and Tanzania whereas stakeholder engagement partners are in Burkina Faso, Tajikistan and Kenya. This project aims to engage decision makers in governments, businesses and trade bodies who are active in shaping the future of semi-arid areas. In addition to this, it aims to strengthen the commitment of these key decision makers to rapid, inclusive and resilient development in these regions by providing evidence of the threats and opportunities that semi-arid economies face in relation to climate change. Five PRISE countries are working on cotton, beef, milk and tourism to identify climate change impacts and adaptation with the potential for economic transformation and diversification in the semi-arid lands, she added.

Dr. Fahad Saeed presented a paper on 'Climate change implications for cotton production in Pakistan'. He informed the audience that agricultural production, processing, trade and consumption contribute up to 30% of the world's emissions when forest clearance is included in the calculation. Climate change influences agricultural production through increased temperatures, altered precipitation, and changes in atmospheric carbon dioxide, extreme events, and a rise in sea level. Cotton production and textiles make up nearly 60% of the exports of Pakistan; and, provide employment to over 30% of the total labour force in the country, he added. During the year 2014-15, Pakistan was the 12th and 9th world's largest cotton exporting and importing country respectively, he shared. According to a research, 60% of the domestic oil production and 58% of export earnings of the country are attributed to the cotton crop. Almost 79% cotton production area lies in Punjab, followed by Sindh (20%), Baluchistan (1%) and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (0.04%). While discussing impact of climate change, he said that since 1980, Pakistan had witnessed 13 episodes of floods, of which 1992 and 2010 floods were the most devastating. The cotton belt in Punjab and Sindh lies along the Indus River, which was most affected by flood.
Cotton crop in both these provinces incurred huge damages during 2010. According to the World Bank (2010), 21% of the total cultivated area for cotton in Pakistan was destroyed because of floods. Studies estimate losses worth Rs. 11 billion to the farming community from the floods in 2012, he added. Cotton is already being produced in Pakistan under sub-optimal temperature. Rising temperature will affect Turkey, China, USA, Australia and Argentina positively, he predicted whereas India, Pakistan and Sudan will suffer from rise in temperature. Moreover, a study carried out at SDPI using climate modelling estimated a substantial rise in occurrence of heat waves, especially in the provinces of Punjab and Sindh, he said. There is reduction in yields by 80% and 50% in Punjab and Sindh respectively so Punjab is projected to suffer more as compared to Sindh, he added. He explained further that the goal of working with scenarios is not to predict the future, but to better understand uncertainties in order to reach decisions that are robust under a wide range of possible futures.

Ms Samavia Batool presented the on-going research on structure of the cotton value chain in Pakistan. Value chain is a cumulative process through which a product reaches its end users. She stated that value chain analysis can be used for exploring how to add 'value' to the final product, identification of competitive advantage, assessing market structure and relationships as well as for strategic planning. While the global economy is being depressed with huge income and poverty traps, value chain provides important entry points for tackling these massive challenges by integrating small and medium enterprises into large and competitive value chains; promoting inclusive market competitiveness; increasing capabilities of market actors/institutions; and forging new networks, she added. Her research site was D.G Khan and Faisalabad and key informant interviews were conducted with academia, agricultural research institutes, private sector, community representatives and policy makers. Initial results showed that vulnerable groups in cotton value chain are small and medium enterprises, women, small landholders, child labourers and infants. She shared that for the next phase, areas will be identified where adaptive capacity can be strengthened. Other adaptation options that present opportunities for private sector investment will also be identified, she added.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Higher Education Commission, while chairing the session stressed upon the importance of cotton as an important crop of Pakistan being affected by climate change in many areas of Pakistan. Pakistan's economy is highly dependent on cotton production so the government needs to give special attention to this sector, he emphasized.
both the countries.

He said that in the past we had good relations with India but certain events increased tensions between the two countries. He added that the decision of the Indian government to send its Foreign Minister for the Heart of Asia Summit was a positive step in the right direction. He stated that we should not raise our expectations, however, composite dialogue should continue and all issues including the Kashmir issue should be discussed.

Syed Naveed Qamar pointed out that in any democratic country, public opinion mattered a lot. Think tanks, such as the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), parliamentarians, and media were the key players in building public opinion. People of this region wanted good relations at all fronts. He further stressed that we needed to get the support from the public on policy issues and for that opinion maker's role was very critical.

Regarding the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status given to India, Syed Naveed Qamar said that nearly all official formalities and approvals had been completed. However, there remained the issue of implementation. He remained optimistic that this MNF status would facilitate trade between India and Pakistan.

Ms Veena Sikri from the South Asia Women's Network (SWAN), India, said that we should continue our efforts through dialogue at all levels to ensure peace in the region. She said that the Indian incumbent government of Mr. Narendra Modi, since coming to power, had been trying to normalise the relationship at all fronts with its neighbouring countries and in the region. She proposed that a strong economic integration among SAARC countries would bring peace and prosperity to the region. The issues, such as terrorism, economic cooperation and MFN status should be resolved for the benefit of all the countries in the region.

Ms Sikri highlighted that if women of South Asia came together and joined hands to achieve common objectives of peace and prosperity, it would surely have a positive impact. She proposed that the SDPI and SWAN jointly needed to form a women parliamentarians network. Women could be moderators of peace and were also victims of conflict, she added. She said that we needed common solutions to our shared challenges and the SAARC Summit scheduled in 2016 in Islamabad would present such an opportunity where women parliamentarians from both India and Pakistan would be meeting.

Ms Veena Sikri while speaking on the role of media said that it was very crucial in bringing South Asian countries closer. Media should be responsible and should not present and manipulate the dialogues at Track I and Track II levels in a negative manner. While responding to a question on Pakistan bashing, Ms Sikri said that the Indian public wanted to have good relations with Pakistan but due to disturbance created because of growing terrorism had affected the public.

Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, said that major decisions at Track I level dialogue required research based evidences. He said that dialogues at Track II level was necessary, such as South Asia Economic Summit (SAES) and Sustainable Development Conference (SDC), giving an opportunity to researchers to present evidence based research. He further said that above all, improving governance in the region required political will and leadership. He emphasized that political will would only come when there was a demand from the public, civil society and other stakeholders for ensuring peace and governance in the region. If there was no demand, then there would be no political will, and peace and governance in the region would be a distant dream, he added.

Regarding the MFN status, Dr. Suleri said that there was a need to understand that the MFN status is largely
misinterpreted in the general public of India and Pakistan. He further explained that it did not mean that one country was the most favourite in terms of trade. It meant that if trade between two countries stood at 35% of goods, which were only mentioned in the positive list, after the giving of MFN status, the trade would then increase by 85% of goods.

Dr. Suleri also touched upon the importance of role of media in the peace building process. He said that media should stop the proxy war on both sides. He talked about SDPI's study on the increase of cross border cease fire violation that analysed four major newspapers from India and Pakistan. The analysis showed that the media on both the sides reported only one-sided story. He continued that if an individual in Pakistan was to read the stories would interpret India as the country's enemy. He stressed on the need for responsible journalism in both the countries, especially while reporting the proxy wars.

Dr. Suleri further touched upon the Paris attack. He said that the major threat to the world security is Daesh more than the Talibans. He cautioned that if Daesh succeeded to firm up hold in Asia, it would be a much greater threat for this region. He said that in this background, the Heart of Asia Summit had great significance and that our national securities were connected with each other. There would be no peace and safety in the Pakistan if there was conflict in Afghanistan. Similarly, India would not be a prosperous nation unless there was peace in Pakistan. He concluded by saying that cooperation among regional countries for larger security interest was need of the hour.

In the question-and-answer session after the podium discussion Dr. Shekhar Shah from the National Council of Applied Economics Research, New Delhi, India, lamented that South Asia today was the least integrated region in the world. He said that we have many commonalities in this region, which include common culture, common language and even our common colonial masters. Even then we needed to fully connect with one another. He said that the current engagement at Track I level between India and Pakistan needed to be sustained in the future, while the Track II approaches also needed to complement and sustain the official level dialogue at Track I level.

Dr. Shah continued that in India, domestic issues dominate other regional issues and hence policy focused more on the domestic agenda. Due to conferences like the SDC in Pakistan, the policy focus would divert towards regional issues. He said that if we looked at North America, because of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Canada, Mexico and the United States had been able to take big strides in economic development and that we should learn from them.

Dr. Shekhar Shah, while responding to a question on Indian terrorist activities in Balochistan said that there was lack of confidence between the two countries. If we could not sit together and see the common future then the blame game and mudslinging would continue on both the sides, he cautioned. He further explained that that unless there was an increase in people-to-people contact through trade and investments, there would be no salvage to such long lasting issues. He proposed more collaboration than competition in this region.

Mrs. Arifa Khalid Pervez, Member Provincial Assembly, Pakistan, said that the responsibility lay on India when it came to normalising relations between the two countries. She highlighted that the Indian elections' campaign was totally based on Pakistan bashing, whereas Pakistani political parties never used Indian bashing during its electioneering. Mrs. Pervez said that we needed better mutual understanding and that India should act as a responsible big brother if India wanted to be a big brother in the region.

She concluded by saying that Pakistan had been fighting against terrorism for a long time and India should refrain from blaming us blindly for every instance that happened in its country. India should be careful and responsible while bashing Pakistan. India is a big country, however, Pakistan is its equal in respect, she added.
Three different narratives were discussed with regard to overcoming the differences between India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Mr. Ahmed Salim, SDPI, talking about history and heritage of the aforementioned countries said that we have had contradicting narratives which have raised conflicts in the minds of people. Our historical legacy comprises of Darbar Tendon legacy and the British colonial legacy. The events after 1947 and 1971 have been explained through three different narratives. In Pakistani textbooks, we find that Hindus and Sikhs killed Muslims and disgraced their women, while the Indian narrative presents mixed views by recalling that both sides were involved in killing. Our history did not present people's narrative while state ideology narrative was totally different.

Writers like Abdullah Hussain and Qurrat ul Ain had a similar narrative unlike historians. History tells us that Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims killed each other, but there are those people too who saved other religious communities' rights. There was also a conflict between Punjabi and Sindhi language where the first is considered as an Indo-Aryan language under the influence of state ideology. Moreover, we did not accept the Hindu leaders in our textbooks' syllabi who were actually part of history with the entry of Mohammad Bin Qasim in the early 17th century. Leaders Mehmoon Ghaznavi and Ahmed Shah Abdali who were from other countries or continents were made our heroes just because they were Muslims while the Indian narrative labels them as 'invaders'.

Then we had different narratives regarding the Babri mosque. Coming towards the killings of Sikh gurus by the Muslim leaders, the Pakistani historians tried to present biased history by justifying these killings. While talking about the 1857 war, Pakistani narrative mentioned that only Muslims were the victims and completely ignored the difficulties faced by Hindus and Sikhs. Dating back to the partition of 1947, Pakistani narrative considered Muslim League as a pivotal part of freedom movement. On the other hand, Hindu narrative considered both Congress and Muslim League as part of the freedom struggle.

The partition of Bengal, which happened in 1905, is another controversy, because it is referred to as independence of
Muslims as East Bengal had Muslim majority while West Bengal had Hindu majority. Furthermore, Bangladesh considered its birth as an independent country while Pakistan took it as a result of the Hindus’ conspiracy. We even fired Bengali students on 21 February 1952 because they were asking for independence and, thus, this day was declared a mother tongue day due to the fact that the lives of the innocent were taken for no reason. Mr. Ahmed Salim further mentioned that Dr. Romila Thapar mentioned that the event related to Somnath Temple never happened in history and was fabricated to create hatred among the people.

Mr. Harris Khalique, AAWAZ - Voice and Accountability Programme, Pakistan, and also a literary personality, said that one should learn from the past and reconcile with it. In our region, partition did not stop in 1947 and is still in the process where we were being created in fragments. R.K. Narayan, a celebrated fiction writer, says that all the Indian creativity sources came from Geeta which was named as intervening history.

The mainstream curriculum should be changed as it provided us biased ideas, which was troublesome. Only art and literature could heal the wounds and we have to learn to live with different narratives. There would be different narratives as there are different states. The differences can be ignored only by people like Amrita Pritam and Sadat Hasan Manto who were creative artists. The latter’s short story, Tetoal ka Kutta, defines the way of subverting power which can only come from literature, he emphasized.

Ms Munima Sultana, The Financial Express, Bangladesh, said that before coming here people asked her why she was going to Pakistan. She said that to find the solution of the conflicts. One should know how to respect each other first and then we have to go beyond these controversies, she emphasized.

Dr. Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, Unnayan Onneshan, Bangladesh, shared that history affects economy as the latter is readily effected by the status quo of the region. The distribution of power dishevelled the history of Pakistan and Bangladesh and that is why a strong theoretical framework is needed. The relationship of the citizen with the state should be strong which will further help us in alleviating the conflicts between the narratives.

Mr. Karamat Ali, PILER, Karachi, said that we should think about the future of South Asia and have to move forward. If we start living in our history, one cannot think about the prospects of one's future.

Dr. Navsharan Singh, International Development Research Centre, India, said that we always begin by lamenting on how our sources are manipulated and it was the inability of the progressives in the region to generate a mode of thinking which transcended the dominant frame of understanding to comprehend our various histories which was then related to nationalism. It further contributed to generating the controversies. Nationalism narrative has visually disarmed the liberal ideas and we have ended up in dominant politics speaking the language of nationalism. We have to reclaim our past so that we could move ahead to a better future, she stressed.

She explained that the Gadar party movement which was considered a Hindu movement, had a Muslim leader, Maulvi Mohammad Barkat Ullah Khan. It showed how a Muslim strived to establish a Hindu-majority party. Omissions and distortions continue to build a mythology of clashes and if we keep on residing in these differences, we would not be able to be together living with dignity, cautioned Dr. Singh.
Mr. Shahid Minhas, organiser of the panel “Victimology of Crime and Terrorism; Lessons for South Asia” welcomed the distinguished speakers and the audience on the behalf of Sustainable Development Policy Institute during the Eighteenth Sustainable Development Conference. Mr. Shahid Minhas regarded this panel as the first ever on the subject of "victimology of crime" in Pakistan. With the brief introduction of panellists to the audience, he handed over the session to the chair, Dr. M. Shoaib Suddle.

Mr. Athar Waheed briefed the audience on 'Policy Framework for Victims of Crime and Terrorism in South Asia'. He began by sharing his personal incident that took place in September 2009 in which the anguish and pain of a woman who had lost her husband and children in an act of terror moved him to study and analyse the issues related to victims of crime and terror. Keeping in view of data in 2013, there were about 33% victims of terror in Pakistan, and also a large number of collateral damage and civilian casualties in events like the US drone strikes. Mr. Athar Waheed concluded by stating, “We need to join hands together to raise the voice of the victims of terrorism and crime so that we may achieve a sustainable future.”

Dr. Mudassar Aziz presented on behalf of Ms. Gulnaz Anjum and briefed the audience on 'Youth's Opinion about United States vis-à-vis Proposals of Reparations to the Victims of U.S. Drone Strikes: A Survey from Islamabad and Peshawar, Pakistan'. He mentioned that victims are ignored and neglected most of the time as they face psychological and clinical issues. They need to be provided psychological support and care. One form of reparation is compensation and the role of reparation is not clear. He added that it is of utmost importance that we apply the vast body of psychological knowledge to understand and address the needs of the devastated victims of terror and crime.
Mr. Michael O'Connell indicated that providing a sense of safety as well as security is the first and foremost priority when addressing the needs of victims of terror anywhere in the world. Victims of terror were said to suffer from a wide range of psychological problems including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, adjustment disorder, and depression among others. The skills of assistance providers, counselling services, the prosecutors and police also need to be enhanced in order to properly identify and treat them. It is necessary for the rule of law to prevail. He concluded by sharing that one should be more focused on their needs and their lives.

Mr. Ejaz Haider mentioned that the issues related to victims of terrorism are crucial as the lives of people living in a society are connected. It is important to have a legislative framework in order to deal with the problem. Terrorism is a wicked problem which is difficult or impossible to solve due to incomplete or contradicting knowledge, number of people and opinions involved and economic problems, he stated.

Dr. Kaleem Imam added that measures like the creation of victim support groups, counselling and rehabilitation services and ensuring the certainty of punishment for the perpetrators of crime and terror can prove to be an effective means for the reparation and emotional compensation of victims.

Dr. Marc Groenhuijsen stated that it is unfortunate that there is a natural tendency of “victim blaming”, or considering the victims of terrorism responsible for the tragic events that happened to them. He stated that this is a very common phenomenon, practiced by law enforcement officials as well as friends and family of the victims. Mass education and awareness of the society is crucial to avoid this traumatic act being meted out to the victims of terror. Reparation of victim of terror, whether in financial or psychological terms or both, is undoubtedly very important. In the western countries there are laws for reparation and other countries should also follow suit. Mr. Groenhuijsen concluded his remarks by sharing that victims of terror often receive more privilege and attention as compared to victims of crime, and the eradication of discriminatory treatment among victims of terror and crime is also vital.

Dr. Shoaib Suddle, in his closing remarks, stated that victimology is a relatively new subject, and our legal system needs to be updated. He emphasized that the entire justice system including the police, law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, the legal framework, and all other government and non-governmental functionaries need to be made aware of the subject of victimology so that the victims of terror and crime may be treated in the best way possible. Victims must be provided with their basic rights, such as the right to information and frequent updates on the judicial and legal processes. At the end, Dr. Suddle congratulated SDPI for highlighting this issue and said that such insightful sessions on this highly important subject will enable further study and raise awareness about the treatment of victims and justice systems in Pakistan and beyond.

The following recommendations were put forth by the panellists and discussants at the panel for further improvement on the subject of victimology of crime and terror:

- Institutional development, for example formation of a National Office of Victim Services.
- Formation and enactment of a National Law on Victims of Crime (Victims' Bill of Rights)
- Creation of a Victims Crime Fund (standardized compensation)
- Victim notification and timely access to information schemes.
- Psychological counselling, free medical entitlements including long-term medical needs
- Ensuring victim's confidentiality and privacy
- Formation of victim support networks
- Creation of public-private partnerships with regard to victim support services
- Regional collaboration in victimology and victim support services and networks
- National commitment to international norms and instruments including the UN conventions
- Enhancement of political will to address the issues to victims' support
• “Victims First” policy for paradigm shift in criminal justice system

• Laws and regulations to be proposed such that they are redressed, best practices of foreign countries to be followed such as how the victims can be compensated, compiling of monetary or required information.

• Need for capacity building of the law and enforcement persons handling the situations.

• Government should show leadership by promulgating a victims’ rights charter/declaration.

• The government should invest implementing a comprehensive victims’ assistance programme including training in criminal justice and should look into victims’ practical, medical, therapeutic and financial assistance.

• Helping victims to regain the control of their lives is important for sustainable development.

• There is a requirement of building trust and confidence among the law enforcement agencies and victims.

**Dinner Plenary**

**Speakers:**

**Welcome Address:** Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

**Remarks by Dinner Plenary Co-host:** Mr. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms, Government of Pakistan

**Remarks by the Chief Guest:** Mr. Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue, Economic Affairs, Statistics and Privatisation, Government of Pakistan

**Remarks by:**

Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairman, Board of Governors, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

**Panel Moderator:** Ms Maryam Shabbir, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

**Report by:** Mr. Mohsin Ali Kazmi and Mr. Irfan Ahmad Chatha, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan

Sustainable Development Policy Institute’s Eighteenth Sustainable Development Conference (SDC) and the Eighth South Asian Economic Summit (SAES) proved that unequivocally it was the beacon of Track II diplomacy, advocacy and policy outreach.

Mr. Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue, Economic Affairs, Statistics and Privatisation, Government of Pakistan, graced the closing plenary of the Eighth SAES on 8 December 2015. He acknowledged the invaluable significance of SDPI’s recommendations for economic policy making. He confessed that his Ministry had incorporated most of the policy recommendations of last year’s SDC at the macro level economic decisions. While formulating trade
related policies, the Finance Ministry particularly took into account SDPI’s proposals like harmonization of standards, logistic cushions, border entry level facilities, removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers, building infrastructures, and reduction of exchange rate volatilities. He said that he would look forward to the policy recommendations from the recent conferences.

Mr. Ishaq Dar praised the fact that the agendas of SDPI’s concurrent conferences comprised of multifaceted panel discussions which were very much relevant in the context of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), COP21 and upcoming SAARC Heads of States Meeting. Mr. Dar pressed for a pragmatic Pakistani response to the possible commitments to reductions of carbon emissions. “Most of the energy projects of CPEC are coal based. Although they would be completed by using super critical technologies to minimize carbon emissions, still the emissions of Pakistan will peak in the medium run. At present, those countries should be pressed to reduce their carbon emissions which have 40 or 50% coal based power generation,” pointed out the Federal Minister.

Federal Minister for Planning and Development, Mr. Ahsan Iqbal was also present at the occasion. He was happy that the civil society was playing its role for securing the future of coming generations and giving them a better standard of living. He suggested that political leaders should also be invited to such forums so that the voice of reason and rationality could reach the political quarters too.

Dr. Abid Qaiym Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, presented a brief account of the panel discussions carried out during the three days of deliberations. Distinguished speakers from 17 countries shared their enriched and experienced insights on topics of climate change, sustainable transportation and logistics corridors, poverty and inequality issues, and role of media in regional cooperation. He was pleased to note that the policy makers’ appetite for evidence based policy recommendations was increasing with time.

Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairman, Board of Governors, SDPI, expressed his gratitude to all the distinguished speakers and participants for showing their commitment to becoming part of the SDPI’s initiative of using advocacy and policy outreach for securing peace and prosperity in the South Asian region.
Mr. Khalid Aziz, former Chief Secretary, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while chairing the session on Securing Livelihoods: Revival of Markets in Post-Conflict Situations said that for the last 13 years, Pakistan had paid a cost of USD 102 billion while fighting the war on terror because of which growth and livelihoods is going down. He also said that as a prerequisite, it is important to re-evaluate the definition of livelihood revival in post conflict situation. If it refers to ensuring two meals a day, then the concept needs to be opened for discussion, he said.

Ms Danielle Huot, Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Kabul, Afghanistan, presented her presentation through a Skype call from Afghanistan. Her presentation was based on two components of SLRC Afghanistan: Markets and Economic Life, and Livelihood Trajectories. Sharing research findings, she said that as a result of the military presence, report found that there were two-tiers/factions of Kandahar's case study economy. The first was the “upper reach” of the economy and second the bottom level, the street vendor economy. She shared that reconstruction, military, and development funds created cash rich, rent economy and the rural-urban, landless migrants comprised the majority of street vendors.

Ms Danielle Huot said that there was a strong sentiment about decreased urban economy after the emplacement of National Unity Government. This can be hinted to the withdrawal of foreign assistance and funds. She suggested that political pre-condition for growth cannot be achieved without addressing predation, control of rent seeking behaviour, and sufficient public investment in public goods.

Dr. Bishnu Raj Upreti, Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research, presented on the post-conflict market revival and women in export led agriculture. He said that though the decade long armed conflict and subsequent political tensions severely affected the market system, Nepal has made efforts to promote agricultural market in the post-conflict period. Women's engagement in high value agricultural exports, particularly cardamom, is high and high value cash crop like cardamom is one of the effective enterprises for women's empowerment. Dr. Upreti also shared that women of Ilam have not only been politically, economically and socially empowered but also have been able to increase their natural, economic, social and political assets. He mentioned that women engaged in cardamom value chain face pertinent problems such as diseases and market fluctuation.
Mr. Kamran Akbar, World Bank, Islamabad, presented a case study of the World Bank project in Afghanistan. He talked about the social transformation by providing opportunities to women at the household level. He said that the role of middle man is widely discussed but in a negative connotation. However, it is important to increase the bargaining power of the producer to minimize the exploitation of farmers/producers by the middleman. For this purpose, it is important to distinguish between enterprise development and skill development. Mr. Akbar shared some results from the study. He mentioned that it facilitated creation of 69,000 jobs in three provinces, 321 business transactions worth US $ 20 m, 41% increase in sales reported by SMEs, 22.7% of the women owned businesses registered with government compared to 4% non-AREDP, 76.1% of the AREDP women entrepreneurs price their products and services through rational market benchmarking, 321 rural-rural/ rural-urban business deals worth US $ 21 million, and facilitated creation of 11 million labour days through economic activity. Moreover, 3,500 women participated in exposure visits within and outside the country. SMEs have reported a sales increase of US $ 2.17 million.

Dr. Abid Q. Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, while presenting a study conducted in Swat mentioned that the focus of this paper was to assess how conflict and army action affected the fruit and vegetables market in Swat; and how the market has an impact on the livelihoods of different actors. He said that the role of markets becomes all the more important when livelihoods of a large segment of the society are dependent on agriculture produce. Dr. Suleri shared that according to the WFP 2010 study, 80% of the surveyed markets in the then NWFP (now KP) and FATA were affected by insecurity, 70% by military operations and two-third by looting. The WFP 2010 study pointed out that traders' access to 43% of markets got inhibited, whereas in FATA, increased transaction costs was reported as a major outcome of conflict. He suggested that as a pre-requisite of dealing with the quick recovery of post conflict area, it is important to institutionalize market management system along with the role of the middle man.
Senator Nisar A. Memon, Chairman, Water Environment Forum, Pakistan, while chairing the session said that SAARC countries needed to play a major role in the sustainable use of water at the regional level and they should also give this issue a priority in their national agenda. He further added that Pakistan lacked policy for water sustainability, equity and security since its inception.

Dr. Tariq Banuri from the University of Utah, USA highlighted the importance of water, sustainability, equity and security. He said that there was a high level of degradation in water resources. Water was a very important factor for human life, economic growth and social equity.

Professor M. Aslam Chaudhry, University of Utah, USA, said that Pakistan was a signatory of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) so it should focus on sustainable water use. He further added that SDGs was serving as a new framework for development in the global community in the post 2015 development era. He continued that in order to move forward, in addition to addressing the SDGs, we should specify targets and challenges in the way of national and provincial policy frameworks related to water scarcity. He stressed that we should clearly address the water agenda, in addition to challenges such as floods and droughts, rising water pollution, degradation of land resources, etc. Prof. Chaudhry’s presentation also highlighted experiences of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) such as implication of the water SDG of water sustainability and security. He further highlighted policy research needs within the context of water development nexus for improving water sustainability and governance.

Dr. Kapil Ghosh from Rajiv Gandhi University, India, said that sustainable use, assessment, development and management of groundwater were essential to address the subject issue as water is a vital resource. His presentation was focused on the groundwater potential areas. He focused on estimation of groundwater resources in Dhalai District, India, which computed according to General Electric Company’97 (GEC) methodology. In GEC’97 methodology, water level fluctuation method and rainfall infiltration method were used to calculate the amount of water from monsoon rainfall. According to his estimations,
monsoon and non-monsoon rains showed that the former accounts for 65% and later accounts for 35% of total rainfall recharge.

Dr. Suleman Tahir from the University of Gujrat, Pakistan, said that textile and paper industries were flushing gallons of chemically polluted waste water every day, which was further causing environmental issues, damaging underground water quality, aquatic life, human health, agricultural lands, etc. Talking about his research findings he added that residents of Faisalabad living near industrial areas were facing the above mentioned water related issues. He further added that industrial tax should also be incorporated to bring the industrialists in the loop as they consume and pollute water resources.

While polluting water, industrialists needed to take responsibility of their actions. He proposed that wasted water should be recycled as recycling process was much more sustainable and environment-friendly. He continued that the recycling method would reduce environment impacts on surface and underground water and would uplift the economy of the Faisalabad region.

Professor Bakhshal Lashari from the Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Jamshoro, Sindh, while talking about efficiency, sustainability and equity of Indus Irrigation System said that Pakistan depended heavily on the system. The irrigation system was critical to agriculture of Pakistan, which is considered the backbone of the economy. Over a period of time, the system's efficiency has reduced considerably. The system's sustainability was threatened both by its physical and financial health. Decreasing groundwater table was deteriorating fragility of water resources. Dr. Lashari said that the system was also merged with several inequalities mainly related to water distribution and allocation among the head and tail reaches. He further added that irrigation system should be utilised efficiently to customise water resources, which would improve sustainability by making water allocation and distribution more equitable.

At the end of the discussion, experts put forward recommendations necessary to address water issues in the region. The experts highlighted that the national water policy should be divided into four distinct sections: challenges, goals, actions and need for support. A few challenges highlighted by the panellists were: declining per capita availability of the water resources; poor quality of water; reduction in ground water resources; recurrent floods and droughts; with considerable social, human and economic costs; and need of cooperation over shared water resources.

In order to provide coherence, the goals recommended that the Pakistan National Water Policy should adopt all the targets and indicators of SDGs on water. To achieve goals, actions required need to be categorised in the following areas: incentives, institutions, information, and investment.

At the end of the discussion, panellists and speakers responded to questions raised by the participants. On emerging trends for sharing water among neighbouring countries and within the country and how at provincial level, water resources harness the atmosphere of mistrust, speakers responded that water was a national issue and agenda but as far as provinces were concerned, there were irrigation and agricultural departments, which were building their capacities and strategies in sharing water among provinces.

While responding to another question about cross boundary Indus river system and what mechanism Pakistan should devise where both countries (in the upper and lower region) could yield benefits keeping in view peace and security of the South Asian region, speakers highlighted that the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) provided a basis for peaceful water sharing between both the countries i.e. India and Pakistan. They highlighted that at this critical stage, water should be among the main issues of concern for India, Pakistan and Afghanistan and SAARC could play major role to solve this issue.
Dr. Vaqar Ahmed, Deputy Executive Director, SDPI, while moderating the session on the Role of Development Partners in a Changing South Asia, welcomed the participants. He said that the focus of the session was to investigate the linkages of improvement and development in the South Asia. He said that for a state, role of development partners, INGOs, civil society, and local NGOs could improve associations for local and regional cooperation. Such endeavours could bring particular, comprehensive and economical additions for countries in Central and South Asia.

He continued by saying, in Pakistan, policies on the paper were very good but these policies must be implemented at the national and provincial levels. Dr. Ahmed concluded by saying that for economic advancement, development partners may engage with the private sector for promoting trade, investment and energy co-operation in the region.

Mr. Bernard Francois, Political Director and the Foreign Secretary, Embassy of European Union to Pakistan, talked about the political will, which was the key to becoming an impressive role player. He said that there was a need to share interest and increase people-to-people interaction.

Mr. Haroon Sharif from the World Bank, Islamabad, said that the World Bank was focusing on improved connectivity in the region and strengthening the weak physical connectivity to ensure sustainable development. He said that the East Asia could greatly benefit from regional cooperation. He continued that now we could clearly see a surge of population, most of which is unemployed that remained one of the reasons why there was more than a 2% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) loss. Most of this population consisted of very young people who were unemployed and were unaware of the latest technology and demands required to meet the pace of development activity in the world.
Mr. Sharif, while highlighting the challenges for sustainable development in the region, said that there seemed to be a lack of shared vision among the countries as each country’s prime focus remained its security. Another challenge he mentioned was knowledge-gap among the youth of the region who were working abroad and who were not aware of the dynamics of the region.

He mentioned that while the foreign policy led forum would be the key player to set pace for the geo-politics of the region, there were certain themes that were apolitical in nature: climate change was one of those themes which South Asia could address with regional mutual consent.

He concluded by saying that at the political level it was desirable to collaborate regionally but at the implementation level it was also necessary to remain positive.

Dr. Werner Liepech from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Islamabad, Pakistan, said that for the ADB along with the other development partners, it was important to realise our role. He said that the donors should not only provide money but should also provide knowledge. He shared that at the moment the ADB was investing US $3 billion on two projects addressing mitigation and adaptation. These projects and their focus should remain on building knowledge base development.

Dr. Liepech said that from the ADB perspective as a development organisation, its work primarily focused on regional cooperation. The approach was forecast to double its investment. He stressed upon establishing meaningful intention and addressing the challenge of exercising proper coordination in activities so that maximum benefits could be reaped.

Mr. Philipp Kauppert from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Pakistan, talked about the social inequalities at the global level. He laid emphasis on addressing social inequality and social injustice within South Asia and in Pakistan.

He said that climate change did not occur in isolation and that it could be associated with a certain model of economic production. He said that we were pressed for time and in order to find workable solutions we needed to move from transactional to transformative approach. It was necessary we to address this issue beyond the policy level for we needed a broader understanding of political economy of change, he further emphasised.

Mr. Kauppert discussed the issue of geopolitical shift. He highlighted that Pakistan had immense population growth followed by a massive trend in urbanisation. He said that the middle class in the country along with the civil society could play a very important role in addressing the question of changing the geo-political situation in the country and the initiative could be led together with a developing partner. Mr. Kauppert said that we had a strong focus on the actors and we chose specific partners who were ready to bring about change. He stressed that this paradigm shift needed to occur simultaneously in all the scales through a combination of top-down and bottom-up action.

He concluded by saying that in a country like Pakistan where there were programmes and initiatives like ‘Vision 2025’, there was limited understanding of the scope of the project. There were deficiencies in the current social context and in order to benefit from the Vision 2025, a stronger coalition of change was needed.

Her Excellency Ms Renate Pors, Deputy Head of Mission, the Embassy of Netherlands, also joined the session as one of the distinguished speakers. She said that if we looked at South Asia, we had government-to-government programmes. There was a need to understand that the idea
of development cooperation had been influenced by many events in the world. She highlighted the importance of the subject by adding that just Asia alone was the most populous continent, with its 4.3 billion population representing 60% of the world population as compared to Africa, which was the second most populated continent. The world’s two most populated nations alone, China and India, together constituted around 37% of the world’s populace. Regional cooperation was required to change the dynamics of South Asia.

Dr. Anindya Chatterjee, Asia Regional Director at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), India, said it was surprising to see that philanthropy in Asia was being highlighted and was expanding. China had provided the largest number of scholarships for African students, surpassing the United States. Dr. Chatterjee expressed his concerns over development assistance programmes as partners were pulling out of commitments recently.

The panel on Data and Evidence for Informed Policy Making in Social Sectors began with a presentation by Ms Saadiya Razzaq, Team Leader for the Pakistan Data Portal Project and Senior Research Associate at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad. The presentation highlighted the need of data in Pakistan’s policy making process to allow for policies which respond to needs of the population and can play a better role in targeting poverty and other key areas of local and international goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also allows for incorporation of the community whom the policies will impact most directly. Ms Razzaq set the tone for the panel by stating objectives regarding the current use of data in policy making and the implications of the emerging global data revolution.
Mr. Arif Cheema kicked off the discussion by reiterating the role of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) and Government of Pakistan in ensuring clean and timely available data. He said that the PBS as a central data collecting agency places high priority on quality checks and uses scientific bases to collect data. Hence PBS has divided the country into 49,000 urban and 115,000 rural blocks which allow for streamlined data collection. This data then allows for better planning and hence better results of policies. In efforts to push the concept of evidence based policy making, PBS plans on incorporating geo-tagging results and to keep a check on data quality, PBS uses a team approach which allows cross checking rather than relying on data from one individual.

Mr. Nasir Amin, shared Pakistan’s current education situation with the audience. Pakistan has the second largest population of primary level out of school children in the world at 6.4 million which means that we have yet to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target of zero primary level out of school children. As we move towards SDGs, Pakistan is ready to sign the agreement and commit to zero students out of school at the secondary level as well. However, according to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), in Pakistan, only 72% of enrolled children complete first grade and the transition rate of students from primary to middle school is only at 40% which means a big task lies ahead of us in terms of achieving the MDG and SDGs education targets. Mr. Amin noted that these figures are the lowest among the South Asian region and emphasized the need to focus on primary schools with full force so that there may be hope for us to reach the SDG target by 2030. To reach that goal, we must have data which will give us the actual picture, show policy makers the base line and allow for a clearer path forward, he stressed.

Mr. Mosharraf Zaidi interacted with the audience and asked them to check their privileges. He took Mr. Amin’s statistics forward to the matric level where only 25% of the children that enrol in primary school make it to matric – hence whoever has passed the 10th grade should consider themselves among the top 25% of Pakistan's population. Mr. Zaidi noted that we often contextualize private and public stimuli in terms of our immediate surroundings which show a glum picture but if we contextualize against the whole country that will help remove feelings of negativity. Currently the whole national discourse is based on feelings rather than numbers and understanding where we stand nationally requires accessible data which can push the common man to realize their responsibilities to self and society.

Mr. Zaidi went on to give real-time examples of where data and evidence had impacted policy making in Pakistan. This included: Punjab government’s monitoring of teacher attendance and absenteeism which brought down rates from 15-20% to 5-10% in 3 years. Another example he gave was related to the work of Alif Ailaan which after closely working with NEMIS brought down the time lag of data publishing from 13 months to 4.5 months. He pointed to the lack of data on private schools because of which the Government has been unable to regulate their growth and suggested that the data revolution be brought about indigenously with a public need rather than be used only to fulfill international donor requirements.

Ms Izzah Meyer mentioned that Pakistan already has limited resources and it is in everybody's best interest to incorporate evidence based policy making and target limited resources on areas that the country and its people need. She also shed light on the work of Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi regarding the 2016 National Education Policy (NEP) and way forward from the 2009 NEP which became void after the 18th Amendment in which education became the sole responsibility of provinces. They are also targeting areas that the previous NEP had not incorporated such as inclusive education and policies for differently abled children.

Dr. Pervez Tahir lamented that we often make policies and then search for data to back them and spoke of his experience that...
as part of the MDGs planning committee in 2000 which set the targets that Pakistan would focus on. At the time of setting these targets, the baseline data available was from 1990 when the poverty rate stood at 26% - hence according to the MDGs goal of reducing poverty rate by 50% the target for 2015 was set at 13%. By 2013-14 Pakistan’s official poverty rate was 8%, Dr. Tahir noted that the poverty rate henceforth will continue to decline on paper and that there is a need to fix this situation and allow for data representative of reality.

Dr. Nadeem Javed said open and big data are now changing dynamics of political reality and swaying the policy making process towards data rather than perception. He noted that because Pakistan is not a homogenous country – it has five different geographical regions and people with varying idiosyncrasies – all differences need to be taken into account when creating policies and national plans. Hence it is important for the government to have credible data on socio-economic indicators. Dr. Javed showed the audience ground reality of data collection where the surveyors only get paid PKR 230 per day and have to fill 150 forms during that time. If there is no priority placed on data and collectors are not given incentives, it is very hard to judge reliability of the obtained data.

Dr. Javed spoke of another barrier to open data which is the lack of coordination between different bodies. To tackle this, the Planning Commission hopes to incorporate data from the major collectors and create a more comprehensive picture. He noted that many changes are being made for the better for the Population Census beginning in January 2016 and hopefully preliminary results will be available by June 2016. He urged community stakeholders and said it is the responsibility of media, academia and civil society to create awareness and sensitize politicians to the data available.

Senator Osman Saifullah while giving closing remarks appreciated the work of SDPI and the Pakistan Data Portal. Reflecting on his learning from the panel he urged the need of getting data and numbers to policy makers by interacting with Senate committees. He said use of technology is inevitable, it cannot be stopped and that we should use it to propel the data revolution further.

The following recommendations were tabled at the session:
- There is a need to gather localized data for localized solutions;
- Targets should be set as achievable rather than popularizing large scale numbers for hype;
- The drive for evidence based policy making should come from the local people and public whom the policies impact directly;
- Data collectors should set national standards which are also in line with international data standards to allow for better comparability;
- Academia should use data collected for further analyzing situations and brief policy makers accordingly;
- Policy makers should be more open to suggestions from academia and work to improve local indicators; and,
- Data collectors and academia should interact with policymakers in the right way and convey their messages.

Session D-5:
Religious Minorities in South Asia

Chair: Mr. Tariq C. Qaiser, Member National Assembly (PML-N), Sargodha, Pakistan
Special Remarks: Dr. Navsharan Singh, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), New Delhi, India; Ms Romina Khurshid, Member National Assembly, Government of Pakistan
Panel Organiser: Ms Mome Saleem, Heinrich Boll Stiftung, Islamabad, Pakistan
Moderator: Dr. Humaira Ishfaq, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
Book Launch: Islam, Minorities and Sustainable Development (SDPI's Urdu Publication)
Speakers:
Ms Ayesha Salman, Editor and Author, UK (via Skype)
Mr. Sanaullah Rustamani, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan
(Presentation: Discrimination against religious minorities: An analysis of the textbooks of Sindh, Pakistan)
Ms Mome Saleem, Heinrich Boll Stiftung, Islamabad, Pakistan; and,
Mr. Ahmad Salim, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
Report by: Mr. Safyan Kakakhel, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
During the panel on “Religious Minorities in South Asia”, Ms Ayesha Salman, Editor and Author, who was connected via web link from England, said that the religious minorities in Pakistan were living in a state of constant fear and insecurity. They lived in a state of uncertainty and fear about the safety of life and property and they had a constant threat to their life and well-being. She added that it was important to note here that discrimination and hate against religious minorities was an issue that did not only exist in Pakistan, or South Asia, but was a worldwide phenomenon. After the Paris attacks, racism and hate towards Muslims had increased considerably, so this issue was not bound to a particular region.

In many places around the world, religious minorities were susceptible to being treated as lesser human beings, with hurtful and hateful slurs and derogatory words and terms commonly used to describe them. In this regard, she said that it was critically important for us to teach our children from an early age that all human beings, from all colours, religious identities or backgrounds, must be treated with dignity and respect.

Ms Ayesha Salman said that technically, the rights of all minorities had duly been recognized and guaranteed in the Constitution of Pakistan, but it was mostly a problem of the general mind-set of the people and how they viewed religious minorities that needed to be changed. The issues included the discrimination of the minority Ahmedi community, for example, in the clause mentioned in the Pakistani passport, as well as issues such as forced conversions of Hindu girls in Sindh.

In this regard, the state should take all efforts to ensure that all the constitutional rights that had been guaranteed to the religious minorities in Pakistan were being upheld, including the rights that have been given to them under all the international conventions ratified by, and that Pakistan was a signatory to. By ensuring these steps, we should be able to build a strong and united Pakistan for our children, as a humane and progressive society, she stressed.

Speaking next, Mr. Sanaullah Rustamani from the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan, presented his research regarding the discrimination of religious minorities in the textbooks of Sindh. He said that the objective of his research was to study the textbooks in the curricula of the Sindh Board for any cases of outright and/or subtle instances of religious discrimination. To add some context to the situation, he said that tolerance between the two major religious identities in Sindh, namely Muslims and Hindus had historically always been high in Sindh, and Muslims and Hindus had been known to coexist peacefully for centuries in the region.

However, Mr. Rustamani quoted some excerpts from the textbooks of various courses, most notably Pakistan Studies, in which discriminatory statements and sweeping generalizations against religious minorities could be found. These included statements that mentioned the “slavery of Hindus” being considered “worse than the slavery of the British”, statements against the caste system of Hindus, a statement in the Class 8 Social Studies textbook that declared that “Hindu racists” were not only against Muslims, but “against all minorities”, etc. In this backdrop, he said that the education curricula of Pakistan needed to be revised and in particular, textbooks of subjects like Pakistan Studies, Islamiat and Urdu needed to be carefully scrutinized to ensure that hateful and/or discriminatory material was purged from them.

Speaking next, Ms Mome Saleem, senior researcher on social and gender issues, said that some of the causes of the inclusion and existence of hate material in the textbooks of the Pakistani curricula were because of the distorted and politically motivated so-called “Islamization” drives in all
spheres of the national dynamics during some previous government regimes particularly that of the 1980s, which unfortunately affected the education curricula as well and resulted in the inclusion of some biased and hateful material against some religious minorities, or their rituals and festivities and their contributions to Pakistan were completely ignored from being mentioned in them, which further added to the sense of alienation and marginalization of minorities in the national social dynamics.

Mr. Ahmad Salim, a senior researcher and author, commented on the impact of the post-18 Amendment devolution of education to the provinces. He mentioned that the devolution could have some positive impacts as well as some negative ones. One positive impact was that the Sindh government had recently drafted the Sindh Education Policy 2015 in which through a parliamentary resolution the restoration of Hindu textbooks for the Hindu community was being enabled. Mr. Ahmad Salim said that it was a strange occurrence that religious minorities in Pakistan either had to study Islamic Studies, or they were offered a choice of studying a subject called “Ethics”. He said this made matters complicated as there was a dearth of teachers and arrangements for the instruction and teaching of this course. Furthermore, the course for Ethics was pretty complicated and thus most non-Muslim students often opted for the mainstream Islamic Studies course for the sake of simplicity. Secondly, a course in Ethics may imply that those studying it lacked in “ethical” behaviour.

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Similarly, another issue faced by the non-Muslim students was that of the provision of additional marks to Muslim students upon achievements like Hifz-e-Quran. He said that such provisions should also be made for the students belonging to non-Muslim communities for achievements in their respective faiths.

Speaking next, Ms Romina Khurshid, an MNA and social rights activist, described the discrimination her daughters faced while they were in school on the basis of their religious identity and the trauma and loss of identity they had to face, and how they learned to deal with the problems and how it affected their self-esteem while growing up.

She added the situation in some parts of the country was actually worse since in some parts of Sindh, Hindus could even send their kids to school. She said she had proposed the creation of a National Commission on the Status of Education of Minorities and stressed the need for an evaluation and monitoring of the commission. In a similar vein, she also mentioned the positive role of the Non-Muslims Parliamentarians Caucus (NMPC) which discussed, debated and worked out possible remedial measures and solutions for various issues faced by religious minorities in Pakistan by engaging the civil society with non-Muslim Parliamentarians.

Ms Khurshid said that education was probably the main problem and major impediment to the emancipation of non-Muslim communities in Pakistan. She said she was also against the “quota system” in which seats were reserved for the minorities. She said that if all citizens of the country were equal as Pakistanis, then why should there be a quota reserved for any particular religious or ethnic identity.

Additionally, she said that it was crucial to hold a fair population census to determine the actual number of non-Muslim population in the national demographic since in a lot of matters such as the allocation, division and
distribution of funds, population was the main deciding factor and the statistics related to minority population were often understated which caused them to receive lesser funds than due.

Mr. Lal Chand Malhi, an MNA, said that the Quaid’s speech of 11th August 1947 had promised a secular nation state with complete freedom of religious identity and separation of religion and government, however it was unfortunate that the promise had not been kept, instead the exact opposite had occurred and the Pakistani state and its laws and systems were modified gradually to become entirely faith-based and hence automatically discriminatory to all other faiths.

He also added that the mindset in Pakistan was so bad that he had witnessed derogatory remarks being passed against non-Muslims on the floor of the Parliament, so it was not difficult to understand how the situation must be in the other parts of the country, whether public or private.

Speaking last, Dr. Navsharan Singh from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), New Delhi, stated that the partition of United India was one of the bloodiest and most bitter events in recent history, and that had set the context and background for the on-going religious persecution in India and Pakistan. She said it was unfortunate that there had been numerous examples of faith-based hate violence in India, e.g. Gujarat incident in 2002, the Muzaffarpur incident, etc.

She said that additionally there had been cases of sexual violence against women from religious minorities. She said that the fear instilled in religious minorities was a very serious matter, the magnitude of which could be assessed from the cases in India in which some of the biggest national celebrities had been asked to leave the country because they were Muslim and criticized the state policies.

Additional problems and issues as stated by Dr. Navsharan Singh were discrimination in jobs, and a culture of impunity for the perpetrators of violence, racism and hate crimes towards religious minorities. She said that there was a huge impact of casual drawing room chatter and day-to-day conversations in which derogatory terms and attitudes were used for religious minorities.

Moreover, she mentioned the deep seated institutional biases, for example the attitude of public servants like the police and doctors was also in many cases biased towards minorities, and that very similar patterns of discrimination could be found for all religious minorities throughout the world. She said that this system of discrimination was also hypocritical in nature since the attitude towards a white Christian and a local Indian or Pakistani Christian was often quite different.

She ended by stating that we needed to clearly raise our voices, articulate our views and educate the masses to dismantle the system of violence, misunderstanding, hate and injustice from our societies.
Dr. Tariq Banuri, University of Utah, USA, while chairing the session highlighted the importance of the subject matter and presented some recommendations addressed to SAARC. He tabled the following suggestions:

- In addition to the current sixteen aids of cooperation, water must be added as a category of cooperation
- SAARC should add water issue to the current six technical committees and there should be a technical committee on water
- SAARC agreement and protocol should be signed for the creation of meteorological stations for sharing weather data and information
- Early warning system should be installed in SAARC countries and must share data and information under SAARC environmental code
- Develop the protocol to share various basins under the SAARC agreement and develop SAARC water policy based on country policies
- Create SAARC water fund to support water institute for research, capacity building and public private partnership projects
- Create SAARC water institute for joint research projects to reward SAARC Ph.D. degrees
- The present Conference organizers should form a group of eight countries of SAARC region to develop comprehensive dialogue for submission of recommendations

Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairperson Board of Governors, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan, highlighted the importance of the issue in his special remarks and said that management of water resources had emerged as one of the most important issues in the world which had also been acknowledged by the world community.
He emphasized on establishing a working group of SDG at the regional level for sustainable water management. He called upon the SAARC countries to take steps for managing the water resources. Impact of climate change, destruction of monsoon, and temperature increase had impacted of amount of water and quality of water. He also emphasized on the regional transboundary issues and suggested to resolve the issue through bilateral, trilateral and regional cooperation. He further referred to Nepal and India's conflict on water as Nepal was upper Riparian and India lower Riparian. He suggested that all signed agreements should be revisited.

Mr. Mujib Ahmad Azizi, Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) Afghanistan, gave a detailed presentation and highlighted Afghanistan-Pakistan, and Afghanistan-Iran and Pakistan transboundary issues and water issue. He said that transboundary water resources (TBW) development could not be separated from international politics and attitudes toward cooperation over TBW resources depends on broader concerns related to international relations.

He also talked about water resources in Afghanistan and stressed the need for agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan to address the Kabul River and Indus River basin challenges. He said cooperative interactions over international rivers required engaging in a complex network of environmental, economic, political and security interdependencies. He also suggested water treaty between Iran-Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Mr. Khalid Aziz, former Chief Secretary KPK, said that by 2040 the glaciers would melt as well as global warming changes in the weather cycle would lead to reduction of water in Indus Basin by about 30 to 35%. He briefed the participants about the history of Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship in the past. He referred to a Jirga in Kabul in 2007 during which Pakistan proposed water treaty agreement with the Afghan Government but the Governor of Kandahar had some reservations due to lack of accurate data on water availability. Therefore treaty could not be concluded.

He said that there was a discussion going on with Afghanistan regarding what model to follow whether the Indus Basin Water Treaty or as Afghans had suggested the Iranian-Afghan Treaty (IAT) on Helmond River. He said IAT had some issues that did not take into account subsequent developmental usage of water and it got stuck on equity basis. He also shared some statistics on water availability for agricultural purpose for both the country and spoke about the declining of water availability for agricultural and other usage.

Dr. Bishnu Raj Upreti, Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research, Kathmandu, Nepal, gave a detailed presentation about the conflict between Nepal and India with regard to transboundary issue. He presented Nepal's perspective from peace and conflict angle of shared water resources, Indo-Nepal relations and conflict and cooperation. He said water cooperation was very fundamental because water was important not only for hydro power generation but also for drinking and for the maintenance of the echo system. As part of sustainable development challenges and sustainable development goals, climate change and security issues had to be dealt with existing water issue within that context.

He pointed out to the many issues emerging from Indo-Nepal water cooperation i.e. lack of trust, misunderstandings, and lack of flexibility to explore mutual options. In the context of water cooperation and conflict, the core fundamental issues, from the conflict management was trust deficit. If there was mistrust between countries, things would lead towards negative perspective, pointed out Dr. Upreti.
He talked about the fundamental pillars and parameters under which new cooperation should be started. The geographical realities and current sustainable development framework and climate risk, we need to look at these from the context of non-cooperation, he said. Water resources are limited and both countries are not properly focused towards mutual benefit of cooperation. He also emphasized the resolution of this issue on an urgent basis for addressing power crisis and promoting trade/economic growth in both the countries.

Dr. Muhammad Khurshid, South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), gave a detailed presentation on South Asia Marine Environment and important features of South Asian Seas Region. He highlighted the threats to marine ecosystem like ballast water, oil spill, mangrove cutting, anthropogenic factor, rubbish flow, untreated sewage water and tourism activities without any sustainable management concepts. Climate change was another factor along with sea level rise which was a threat to small island states. These were the bigger threats not only for the economy but also for the humanity. Five countries in South Asia had gotten together to mitigate the core issue. Organizations like IMO, UNEP-GPA, UNEP Coral Reef Programme, FAO, Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem, USDA, Civil society, Private Sector/Shipping Associations, other regional and sub-regional agencies were working to address these issues, he stated.

He also suggested measures to deal with climate issues i.e. adoption of policy and strategic approach for controlling chemical drainage into marine waters, enforcement of the regional oil spill contingency plan, national and regional commitments including public sector, private sector (through CSR) and civil society, support (technical and financial) by global community, development partners for policy, strategic and programme planning and implementation, information sharing and GIS data-base development, awareness raising and capacity development at all levels, and use of ICT for linkages with stakeholders.

Session D-7:
Trade Policies of South Asian Countries and Regional Integration

Chair: Dr. Hafiz A. Pasha, Former Federal Minister of Finance, Government of Pakistan
Guest of Honour: Senator Shibli Faraz, Chairperson, Senate Standing Committee on Commerce, Government of Pakistan
Speakers:
Ms Munima Sultana, The Financial Express, Bangladesh
(Presentation: Regional Connectivity through the BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement: Gain or Loss for South Asia?)
H.E. Mr. Bharat Raj Paudyal, Ambassador of Nepal to Pakistan
Dr. Shekhar Shah, National Council of Applied Economics Research, New Delhi, India
Report By: Mr. Malik Haroon, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan

After thanking the SDPI for providing such an opportunity, Ms Munima Sultana, The Financial Express, Bangladesh, stated that trade was one of those issues that still needed to be addressed and as a journalist she had been analysing trade policies. From the journalistic point of view, we try to answer why a certain issue was important, she said, adding, therefore, we tried to figure out its importance. Ms Sultana said that all the South Asian countries were members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) but were still lagging behind in trade. “Within a span of more than 30 years, which was a long time, we have not seen any significant development. South Asia has a wonderful opportunity; there are 1.67 billion people living in this region with two-third of the population living below the poverty line. Nevertheless, the region remains unfortunate as less than 5% trade had been carried out in this region in the past few years. There are different challenges and stages we still have to overcome. There is a need to create different markets and to make developments in this sector,” emphasized Ms Sultana.

South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) was made in January 2004 at the 12th South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit in Islamabad. We had trade policies and reviewed them several times. It created free trade for 1.67 billion people in Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and India. The purpose of the agreement was to provide competition and the resulting benefits to countries in the region, pointed out Ms Sultana. “Besides coping with trade barriers, we had to overcome conflicts between countries by providing safeguard measures like various institutional arrangements. When we compare ourselves with other regions, like the European and South East Asian regions, we come to realize the extent of challenges that we will have to overcome. The success of European Union lies in regional integration and has inarguably made other parts of the world enthusiastic to earn similar achievements in the respective regions.
Regional integration has become a widely accepted model that guides policy makers, development partners, and experts for better resource management to benefit their regional economies. What EU achieved in 60 years through economic integration is now foreseeable in Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in a shorter time,” explained Ms Sultana.

Despite the fact that the SAARC has turned 30, its success as a regional forum was not encouraging, she stated, adding, “In spite of starting the process of economic integration, the region could not make any demonstrable achievement in trade.” SAARC countries were still recognized as one of the most disconnected part of the world even after 30 years of formation, lamented Ms Sultana.

Talking further she said, “Most of the SAARC member states have deep-rooted political differences and mistrusts, leaving the region far behind compared to the successes of EU or ASEAN. But this region has the full potential to utilize demographic dividend, natural resources, arable land, geographic advantages, similar cultural and social heritage and, thus, the potential of leading the world with long periods of growth.”

Ms Sultana tabled the following recommendations: removing customs tariffs of tradable goods in phases which were supposed to be completed by 2016 and declaring the region free from tariff barriers; trade facilitations including bonded warehouse; forming multilateral trade rules, etc.; and, SAARC members should also be allowed to maintain sensitive lists of products, and under the umbrella of SAFTA, India should announce tariff-free access, to all Bangladeshi products.

Dr. Shekhar Shah, National Council of Applied Economics Research, New Delhi, India, began his discussion by stating that the South Asian region with shared history and culture had a huge potential for economic integration. But issues of national identity and internal consolidation had caused political tensions and mistrust between the countries. As a result, intra-regional integration remained limited.

“There is a change taking place in the democracies of our countries, especially in India. In 2050, it will have a large labour force, even larger than that of China. There are demographic transitions occurring too. To cater to this large labour force, we need economic growth to create jobs and employment,” stated Dr. Shah.

He further stated, “The world is changing and changing at an accelerated pace. For example, nature of corruption is different as it was five years back. Supply chain and corruption economics are changing dramatically. The world will not wait for South Asia to bring positive changes in it. So these things are to be focused. Today developed countries are developed because of their good trade partnerships. South Asia’s intra-regional trade accounts for just 5% of total trade, compared to 25% in ASEAN.”

After expressing his compliments to SDPI, H.E. Mr. Bharat Raj Paudyal, Ambassador of Nepal to Pakistan, said that regional integration was the ideal for prosperous SAARC region. Small changes could return good effects and had multiplier effects. A single step in the right direction leads to significant changes. A positive development in India-Pakistan bilateral trade could bring positive change for the whole of the South Asian region, he stressed.

Another issue that the ambassador discussed was the non-tariff barriers which particularly existed in India: “Until non-tariff barriers are not discussed, we cannot progress in trade related issues. There are also other very positive developments that can bring positive changes, for example, TAPI gas pipeline — it will open new opportunities for the countries involved. Greater regional integration will enhance prospects for growth and shared prosperity in...
South Asia that is home to 44% of the world’s poor.”

Dr. Hafiz A. Pasha, Former Federal Minister of Finance, Government of Pakistan, speaking at the session pointed out that this region over the last few decades had witnessed increasing inequality. In the early 80s, the gap in low to middle-income countries was 22%. By 2013, the inequality increased to 53%. “South Asia has some of the worst human development outcomes worldwide. Policies to address inequality should focus on ensuring equality of opportunity, improving upward mobility, and providing adequate support to mitigate shocks for the poorest,” emphasized Dr. Pasha, adding, “South Asia is home to billions of people and faces many problems. These problems call for stronger cooperation among regional countries. Unfortunately, South Asia is one of the least integrated regions on all fronts. Trade can lead the process of regional integration and ensure cordial relations among all the countries.”

“The SAFTA agreement was a big achievement. Due to this agreement 18% trade growth was witnessed whereas, during the same time, world trade hardly increased to 2-3%. About 90% of the intra-regional exports originate from India. What are the apprehensions for Pakistan? If Pakistan wants to give India the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status, the time has come to do so. In this way, 100% Indian goods will reach Pakistan. Pakistan has a market of around $200 billion. But there are steps which Pakistan needs to undertake regarding the trade policies,” stressed Dr. Pasha.

The first thing Pakistan needs to do is to protect farmers from import duties, he proposed. Dr. Hafiz Pasha explained, “Afghanistan's imports and exports also face serious concerns. In the Heart of Asia conference, Pakistan gave a special proposal to sign SAFTA with Afghanistan. Afghanistan is facing serious financing problems on its imports; its imports are more than its exports. Besides promoting trade, services sector should also be increased manifold to increase movements. In the present era, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), direct aid, etc., are down, so trade is the option to uplift the economy. South Asia faces the challenge of making the trade and its gains inclusive. There is urgency to link trade policies with poverty reduction strategies of the South Asian governments along with the need of establishing regional capital markets, cooperation in the banking system, etc.”

Senator Shibli Faraz, Chairperson Senate Standing Committee on Commerce, Government of Pakistan, said that there were so many factors required to increase our exports like infrastructure development, skills enhancements, competitive advantage, good relationship with the neighbouring countries, elimination of tariffs and non-tariff related barriers, etc. He said that if we look forward to trade facilitation then a lot of factors are needed to be addressed like trade in goods and services, non-tariff barriers, sensitive lists under the South Asian Free Trade Area (maintained by India), harmonization of standards, customs procedures, transport connectivity, trade financing, and exchange rate policies.

“The vision to do trade by our political leadership is the most important,” he emphasized, adding, “Leadership needs to focus on economic development of their nations. Unfortunately, in the case of India and Pakistan, the two big players in South Asian community, SAFTA had not been fruitful and did not widen the trade relations. In terms of economy, India is the biggest player in Asia apart from China. But due to a sheer lack of political vision, the problems of the large populations have not been resolved.”

Due to energy crisis, Pakistan is facing some serious challenges, especially in the textile industry sector, lamented Senator Faraz. He further added that we had wasted a lot of time and needed to catch up with the rest of the world. He was glad to note that the Heart of Asia conference had brought a lot of positive energy, and wished that it would harvest concrete results. He noted that discussions facilitated by SDPI would bring solid recommendations as well.

During the question-and-answer session, one of the participants asked about the significance of benefits of giving MFN status to India. Senator Faraz answered by saying; “Pakistan and India are close neighbours as well as two important members of SAARC. There are immense potentials of cooperation in the sectors of trade, industry, research, etc. Instead of getting the benefit of geographical proximity, time was wasted on airing differences. It did not help in co-sharing prosperity, rather precious resources were wasted on wars. Both sides agree that increase in trade and economic engagement would help not only in the mutual quest for national development but also contribute to building trust between the two countries.”
Mr. Majyd Aziz, Former President, Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industries, while chairing the session talked about the business associations and conflicts. He stated that there are 21,000 members of Karachi chamber whereas 700 town associations and it is the eighth largest chamber of the world. He further elaborated on different frameworks about business associations and traders' behaviours.

Mr. Umair Javed, Visiting Faculty, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), presented his research on “The bazaar-mosque relationship in Punjab: Mapping political and social alliances”. He discussed the key points with regard to economic, political and cultural transformation and how traders and merchants have become important political, social and economic actors along with religious organizations and leaders. The basic objective of his study, as commissioned by DFID's AWAAZ project and the Aurat Foundation, was to get a descriptive account of the transformations mentioned earlier, understand the role played by bazaar actors, and their associations in societal conflicts (primarily sectarian), exclusionary policies and religious victimisation.

Mr. Umair Javed shared his key findings that Pakistan is the most urbanized country in South Asia. Using GIS technique, he assessed that nearly 50% of population lives in urban settlements which will increase to 116 million by 2030. Urbanisation needs to be taken into account if we want to tackle extremism, stressed the speaker while sharing his study. About 40% of the legislators in the Punjab Assembly are associated with the profession of business. They use the market space for gathering support from urban actors and urban labour unions, he further informed the audience.

Sharing his study, Mr. Umair Javed stated, “In 2010, the Data Darbar shrine became the target of a deadly twin-suicide
bombing attack, which killed fifty individuals (including three businessmen from the adjacent Circular Road market). In response and as a sign of protest against the government's failure to protect citizens, all inner city markets – including Shah Alam – remained closed. The ruling party in government has since then become especially vigilant in these areas. Under pressure from various bazaar leaders, CCTV cameras have been made functional, while religious groups operating in the area are closely monitored”.

PML-N government clamped down on dubious charities and actively sought support from traders to eliminate militants' financing. The government was able to do it because it has an independent base of support in Lahore. Mosque-bazaar relationship is instrumental and benefits both; it is ideological, shared understanding of religion and common world view (tableegh is crucial in this regard); intolerance and violence is more widespread where extremist organizations have forged close ties with political elites to exercise autonomy.

Ms Simbal Khan from the Planning Commission of Pakistan, emphasized on management of population, expansion in urban areas and monitoring of zakat distribution networks to mitigate conflicts. She said that in Pakistan there is informal economy based on largely unsystematic data because of absence of true data. She stated that with a very high rate of literacy and urbanization, peace should be first and foremost, and equitable resources should be provided. Urban structure should also be available and taxation system should be improved.

Chaudhry Kashif from the All Pakistan Tajir Ittehad, Rawalpindi, Pakistan, highlighted the key role traders have played throughout the national history in promoting peace, social harmony and cohesion. He said that 6 million traders represent the economy of Pakistan who play an important role more so than the political parties. They are into creating peaceful environment in Pakistan. He said that the phenomenon of market associations is totally democratic.

Mr. Naeem Mirza, Aurat Foundation, Islamabad, gave special remarks during the session by stating that regulation and a fair democratic system is crucial to conflict prevention in Pakistan. He posed interesting questions as to why numerous profitable businesses are extending their business so much? Why do people want to earn more and more profits? Profits are extending without any limitations and why is this not regulated by the state? All this should be regulated by the state and there should be democratic suspension and limitations should be defined by the Government of Pakistan.

Dr. Zubair Iqbal from the National Defense University shared his concerns regarding terrorism in the country by saying that the mosques and religious organizations operate under a laissez faire system and the state has no control over the working of these institutions. He recommended developing a regulatory system for keeping an eye on the market places and other social spaces to curb the spread of extremist ideologies. He described how people are becoming increasingly impatient which is why we are unable to solve our problems systematically and for this sake one needs a solution to get out of this problem.

Mr. Majyd Aziz, Former President, Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Pakistan, said that markets should be made easy for the new entrants. We should encourage new blood for fresh ideas and all the barriers against it should be removed.

Labour unions and government should be on one table without any dispute and they should not interfere in each other’s work. Finally, business, religion and fair taxation are far important and must be treated in a proper manner, he emphasized.
Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, presented a brief account of the panel discussions carried out during the two mega events from 7 – 10 December 2015. He mentioned that Islamabad held the Eighteenth Sustainable Development Conference (SDC) and the Eighth South Asian Economic Summit (SAES) on track II while the Government of Pakistan organised the “Heart of Asia Conference” on track I. The highest political leadership from 18 partner countries of Istanbul process gathered in the “Heart of Asia Conference” to discuss peace and prosperity in the region, regional stability and economic cooperation, the security cooperation, role of civil society in strengthening democracy, and the role of civil society in Pakistan. On the other hand, international delegates and public thought leaders gathered to discuss how to achieve peace and prosperity in the region, and to float the recommendations and suggestions at the forums of SDC and SAES. He further said that since the changeover to democratic government, the appetite to listen from the independent researchers and thinkers had increased manifold.
He talked about how one could turn these Sustainable Development Goals into an opportunity for a shared and collective action across the borders. Second, what could be done about climate change which knew no boundaries. He gave some examples on how climate of one region affected the other region. If there were floods in India, Pakistan would also get affected; if there was a cyclone in Maldives or Bangladesh, coastal areas of Pakistan would also get affected.

Dr. Abid Suleri said that Pakistan would be hosting the SAARC Summit in 2016 and may also be handed over its presidency. He further said that SAARC countries had not only common borders, but similar problems. Solutions to those problems were common and we could tackle those problems through collective action, he stated. While talking about issues regarding inclusive and sustainable growth in South Asia, he said, trade was the pillar for economy and the significant dividend trade could bring was peace and prosperity. Having more economic and trade corridors was healthy ensuring economic stability. Such corridors included Pak-China, International North South Corridor by India, and BBIN (Bangladesh Bhutan India Nepal). These corridors not only brought economic connectivity but also socio-cultural connectivity. In one of the previous SAARC meetings was discussed the important outstanding corridors of transport and logistics (i.e. the SAARC motor vehicle agreement and SAARC railway agreement) in order to evolve a win-win situation through these agreements.

He said that discussions on the role of media in regional cooperation brought fruitful outcomes. One of the main recommendations was that the media should stop proxy war creating hype on issues.

He shared with the audience that 51% of region's population consisted of women and that the sessions had a fruitful discussion on women empowerment. There was a special panel consisting of women parliamentarians from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal and Bhutan.

Ms Khawar Mumtaz gave a keynote lecture titled ‘Role of Women Empowerment in Securing Peace and Prosperity for Sustainable Development in South Asia’ in which she discussed the many dimensions of women empowerment. She emphasized that there was a universal acknowledgement of the principle that all citizens were equal regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity and class. But women and other vulnerable groups needed special measures to participate in the affairs of the South Asian countries. There was quota for women in educational and political institutions such as in Pakistan and Nepal where there were quotas of women's seats in the legislative assemblies. Process of women empowerment was very slow and uneven, she lamented.

She mentioned that Sustainable Development Goal 5 was indeed aspirational. This goal dealt with women empowerment and their equal rights, recognising barriers faced by women across the board, i.e. discrimination against women, trafficking, violence on women and harmful practices. “We have laws, we have policies and quotas but it's the mind-set which is lacking,” asserted Ms Khawar, and further questioned, “What is the critical element which can unlock the barrier to unleash women's potentials?”

By giving many examples in different areas of Pakistan including terrorism affected areas, she explained that women have the capacity and ability to break the norms and contribute to peace and prosperity and to food security which are essential for sustainable development. In those inevitable conditions where women are protecting their sons and husbands by marching on roads and where they are left widows or half widows with children, their non-traditional role is accepted in those difficult circumstances. She raised the following questions: why were women sent back to their traditionally prescribed roles when the situation was over? Why were women not given the freedom to determine their own destiny? Why were their skills not consolidated which they showed in the times of crises?
She said that women were not seen as victims and dependents in the times of crises and that we should not wait for exceptions to mobilize women but it should be the norm to mobilize women in the environment which would help them decide how to participate at the level they could and to be included in the peace table and planning. She emphasised that we did not need special situations to induct them rather their inclusion should become a norm.

Engr. Shams-ul-Mulk, Former Chairman, WAPDA, gave a keynote lecture titled ‘Role of Knowledge in Securing Peace and Prosperity for Sustainable Development in South Asia’. While talking about knowledge, he gave a thorough insight as to how there was nothing more valuable in knowledge but the Qura’an. He gave an example of the first word of the Qura’an i.e., “iqra” meaning “read”. “The core meaning of the word iqra means to pursue knowledge,” explained Engr. Shams-ul-Mulk.

He added that the world was going through and had gone through revolution of knowledge over centuries. Man understood very little but his urge was never ending. In the 21st century, the driving forces would be truth, knowledge and reason. These are the qualities God and which are required to sustain the humanity on the planet. The same qualities would help us go through the biggest problems. With development, problems also occurred which should be understood and resolved, emphasized Engr. Shams-ul-Mulk.

He appreciated the work of Ghulam Ishaq Khan and stressed that the best thing he had ever done was his Institute, i.e. the Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute, Swabi. He further said that whatever Ghulam Ishaq Khan did during his tenure in the government was wonderful but the Institute he formed was for tomorrow, for future, for the next generations which was important for all of us. “What are we doing for our generations to make their tomorrow worth living?” he questioned.

While speaking about climate change, he said that climate was an issue for the entire humanity. Governments did not do the things that institutions did. We need to build the institutions which could deliver, and address our issues which were more likely to hit us, he emphasized. He gave an example that Tarbela and Mangla Dams were not built by the Ministry of Water and Power but by WAPDA. The nation should support institutions and fund them with objectivity and produce more teachers, professors and more Ph.Ds. “If we look at tomorrow of Pakistan there are three important things: water, energy and food. And unless and until we have created institutions with the knowledge capacity to deliver these demands of country, we wouldn't be able to go beyond. We don't need the things which we are comfortable with; we need the things which we need to live with,’ explained Engr. Shams-ul-Mulk.

Dr. Saman Kelegama, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Sri Lanka, appreciated the work of SDPI and for especially organizing the SAES and SDC simultaneously. He thanked Dr. Abid Suleri on this excellent job and declared the SAES as the most successful Summit ever held. He further said that partaking from academia, political parties, government sectors and private sectors was healthy for the occasion. He acknowledged that SDPI was not only able to influence policies but was able to organize such mega conferences with highly successful results. He closed his remarks by saying that the IPS Colombo, Sri Lanka, was indeed proud to be partner of SDPI in this stirring experience.

Dr. Hiramani Ghimire, Executive Director, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics & Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal, also appreciated SDPI’s work and for organizing mega events successfully. He further added that all the relevant and important issues had been covered in the four days’ conference. He acknowledged that organizing SDC annually was also a great source of inspiration. He thanked SDPI’s efforts to conduct SAES in Pakistan as it had to be organized in Kathmandu in 2015 year, but the organisers there were unable to organize the event due to the massive earthquake that hit the country. He further appreciated that though region was not in the good books of the world in terms of observing the timings, SDPI was an exception. Sessions started and concluded on time. He said that one of the objectives of such an event was networking, and to be able to know people and have a dialogue on common issues of the region.

Mr. Imran Khan, Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, gave his remarks as the Chief Guest of the closing plenary. He talked about his cricket life. He mentioned that it was very rightly said by someone that it was important for political leadership or governments to create the right environment for other countries for trade, games and other means of
cooperation. The right environment had to be created by political leadership, he emphasized. Only then we could move forward.

Speaking about climate change, he said that other neighbouring countries and Europe had much more awareness about environment, specifically green environment. Europe had well preserved wild life and several national parks.

He lamented that two hundred to three hundred billion rupees had been spent on illegal logging and forest cutting in the last 10 years in KPK only. Whole forests had vanished. He further mentioned that Pakistan was among the top ten countries which were more likely to be affected adversely by climate change though it was not a country which was contributing in the global warming.

He further discussed KPK’s Billion Tree Tsunami which was being executed successfully. “We grew 100 million trees in one-and-a-half years and by March 2016, KPK will be ready to plant 250 million trees,” noted Mr. Khan. He said the ratio of incredible success was only possible by involving the local community in creating and growing nurseries. These plantations had been audited by the World Wildlife Fund and the survival rate was 80 to 80%.

In KPK, the southern region temperature had increased by 1 degree Celsius and the rainfall had dropped by 5.5 inches. Global warming was a global phenomenon and it was definitely going to hit Pakistan, he cautioned, adding, and the only way to contribute was reforestation. He said that by 2018, 10 forests of the size of Changa Manga would be added.

The second major challenge he addressed was food security. He said that since 1992, KPK had not been given the right share of water. If Chashma Right Bank Canal had been built, KPK would have been a wheat exporting province. While criticizing the current Government, he said that the Government did not released the funds for that canal and the funds required for its construction were equal to that of Metro in Islamabad. In terms benefits such as food self-sufficiency, liberation of children who are suffering from water borne diseases and poverty alleviation, it were immense while on the other hand Metro was serving only 30,000 to 40,000 people. Summing up his speech, he stressed on creating a good environment for neighbouring countries to expand trade in order to alleviate poverty.

At the conclusion of the H.U. Beg Memorial Plenary, SDPI's Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Engr. Shams-ul-Mulk by Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel.

The following SDPI's publications were presented by Dr. Abid Suleri to the Chief Guest and keynote speakers:

- SDC Anthology: Pathways to Sustainable Development
- Making Growth Inclusive, Just and Sustainable in South Asia
- Assessment Of Mercury Amalgam Use at Private Dental Clinics in Selected Main Cities Of Pakistan
Peer reviewed SDC anthology titled “Pathways to Sustainable Development” consisting of 21 chapters was jointly published by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Sang-e-Meel and launched at SDPI’s Eighteenth Sustainable Development Conference on 8 December 2015.

For the first time, in the history of our 68-year old country, this book has brought together the views, policies and ideas about sustainable development of the crème de la crème of Pakistan’s leadership – from the country’s sitting President and Federal Minister, former Ministers and a former State Bank Governor – with discourse of the country’s activists, economists, philosophers, journalists, and student researchers. It is this convergence, and sometimes clash of interesting, unusual and potentially transformative ideas between leaders in the echelons of power with practitioners and scholars that offer valuable insights into charting new pathways for bringing about positive shifts in South Asia that makes up the mix of this book's chapters.

This volume is not constrained by national boundaries either. Climate change, development, ecological, education, energy, food, gender, health, planning, trade and water challenges from neighbouring Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal are juxtaposed with those in Pakistan, sub-Saharan Africa, European Union and Central Asia.

It is here that we travel from regional to local stories – from the great Himalayan mountainous region to the Indus-Brahmaputra-Ganges Delta; from arid nomadic deserts to the Rhine River; from education challenges in a small district in Nepal to the struggles of the landless in a village in East Bengal; from the efforts of women entrepreneurs in India to the barriers faced by women in Muslim societies due to gender inequality sanctified in religious tradition; from the economic impacts of post-2014 Afghanistan on bordering regions in Pakistan to the health threats to dental professionals. Each one singular and yet with a commonality of perspective: to make the world a fairer, better and more just place for the 'enhancement of peace, social justice and well-being, within and across generations.'

Sarah Siddiq Aneel

At the 25th General Assembly meeting of the International Society of Doctors for Environment (ISDE) held in Arrezo, Italy, Dr. Mahmood A. Khwaja, Senior Adviser, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan, was unanimously elected as President of ISDE for a term of two years. He took over from Dr. Roberto Romizi, ISDE, Italy. Dr. Khwaja has been member of Board of Directors, ISDE for several years. The ISDE (www.isde.org) formed in 1990, presently has membership in over 35 countries, mostly in Europe, Canada, USA and Australia. The ISDE members, medical doctors and environmentalists are professionals, who in the face of growing pollution and environmental decay, are concerned about the rising incidence of pathological conditions related to environmental degradation and aim not only to answer in terms of medical care, but also to advocate, initiate, and promote effective preventive measures/actions.
Discussions on the first day were rich in content, with themes ranging from sustainable growth and conflict resolution to trade promotion and regional trade.

Corridors for Development
Pakistan is investing in increasing regional cooperation via economic and development corridors, such as the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Panellists agreed that CPEC will pave way for regional development and that corridors are the future for South Asia. Currently, South Asian countries contribute to only 3% of the global GDP and 40% of their population lives below the poverty line. Economic ties need to be embedded into the foreign policy mandate of countries. Co-operation should especially be encouraged in the post global economic crisis, where the growth rate of world trade has fallen substantially from nearly 10% to below 2%.

In order to attract foreign investment to Pakistan, emphasis was placed on infrastructure development. Growth of projects such as the Electricity Transmission and Trade Project for Central Asia and South Asia (CASA-1000) needs to be accelerated as the emerging regional electricity market will open up doors to increased economic activity and economic integration. Investment in regional economic institutions is required in order to encourage dialogues on the economic benefits of projects at higher levels.

Poor regional transport connectivity also leaves the huge potential of intra-regional trade and investments in the region unexploited. Regional transport corridors would help improve poorly developed transport connectivity and then enhance trade and regional development.

To move towards regional connectivity, mobility of people is a necessary condition, for which trust deficits will have to be removed in the form of a liberal visa regime. Focus should be placed on the promotion of knowledge and signing of trade and fiscal treaties among countries of South Asia.

Critical Challenges of Trade Promotion in South Asia and Way Forward
Infrastructural development is central to the process of improving connectivity and economic integration. Not only will better infrastructure improve internal connectivity and open up economical routes, but business partnerships will emerge, benefitting the entire region. For this purpose, transportation development plans need serious improvements.

Economic routes must be developed to facilitate the movement of vehicles for trade, and political differences must not come into play when developing trade policies. The private sector must be allowed to play its role in the trade arena, with minimum government interventions, to further augment efficiency levels.

Promotion of tourism was also suggested as a way to improve connectivity among countries, as well as generate income for the host country.

Policies for economic integration should note historical perspectives of all nations, and a special focus must be placed on empowerment of women in the region.

Leadership for Sustainable Development: Role of private sector
In the coming years, inclusive growth will require successful completion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The private sector is required to play a decisive role in leadership positions in the region in order to ensure that South Asian countries are achieving major development goals.

A cooperative environment in all the countries, along with private sector initiatives to encourage trade relations, will be central to sustainable development in the region. Through private sector activities, people-to-people interaction will increase and the vacuum in economic activity can be filled by multinational companies and the like.

Macroeconomic Stability and Sustainable Growth in South Asia
Macroeconomic stability is conducive to growth and governments must focus on stabilizing the economy before pushing for growth reforms.

In order to ensure equality in the process of economic growth, engagement of the poor and most vulnerable classes is necessary; they must be provided access to productive assets, capital markets, high quality education and skills.

Panellists agreed that the achievement of SDGs requires a clear commitment of resources, along with effective implementation and monitoring methods. For a prosperous South Asian future, leaders need to start thinking of sustainable development both at national and regional levels.

Conflict Resolution
Sustainable growth also requires that multiple interstate and intrastate conflicts be resolved. A proper dispute settlement
mechanism (DSM) should be put in place to deal with trade related disputes (specifically NTB). All NTBs will need to be addressed by taking advantage of SARSO, through standardization and harmonization of customs procedures and by developing SAARC standards which will be accepted by all SAARC countries.

Regional Integration
Discussants called upon respective governments to prioritize initiatives for greater regional integration, and to promote intra-regional trade by reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers. There is a dire need for improvement in regional trade facilitation at the borders.

The use of dialogue between countries should be encouraged to reduce tension between countries of the South Asian region, and a move towards harmonizing legal and regulatory frameworks of the South Asian countries.

There is a need to develop a structure for a regional power exchange after reviewing the power system structures of individual South Asian countries along with their operational procedures and regulatory and commercial requirements for cross-border trade.

More technical studies should be conducted on regional cooperation within South Asian countries in order to identify technically and economically feasible cross-border interconnections and possible financing options based on a cost analysis.

Regional Cooperation for Energy Security
There is a need to develop a structure for a regional power exchange after reviewing the power system structures of individual South Asian countries. Countries should also harmonize legal and regulatory frameworks which deal with cross-border trade along with an Energy Charter Treaty for greater security for cross-border energy transfer related investments and transactions.

Energy experts said South Asian countries should develop East Gas Pricing Hub with regional collaboration because the old gas pricing regime will no longer be a viable solution for Pakistan and other growing economies of the region.

Setting up of Energy Trade Infrastructures is required to identify possible cross-border power transmission interconnection scenarios. There is a need to identify technically and economically feasible cross-border

Limited market size is another obstruction which is also hindering liberalization of trade in services. Therefore, institutional and regulatory frameworks should be regularised for economic integration.

Services Trade in South Asia
An integrated approach towards trade in goods and services is needed. One way is to actively pursue the SAARC investment area by attracting efficiency seeking foreign direct investment (FDI) to the region. Promotion of FDI is pivotal to infrastructure development and domestic productive capacity building.

Regulation of services is pivotal in protecting consumers, and thereby increasing service providers. Service is an input for most of the economic activity in the country and so, the idea of service liberalization for regional integration will be extremely beneficial for improving efficiency and productivity levels in the economy.

Limited market size is another obstruction which is also hindering liberalization of trade in services. Therefore, institutional and regulatory frameworks should be regularised for economic integration.

Role of SAARC in trade promotion
There is a need to develop a SAARC single window initiative that can handle regional customs towards SAARC Customs Union. In addition, a SAARC Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) and SAARC Railway Agreement with in the South Asian regional countries will also help boost regional trade.

Regional arrangements (SAARC Business Travellers Card, Air Services Agreement, Electronic payment system) for regional transportation with environmental concerns should be made for developing sustainable regional transportation.
Compiled by Ms Hira Mira, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan

SDGs and Post-2015 Development Agenda: Perspectives from South Asia

- SDGs must be prioritized, localized and internalized to ensure commitment at all levels. Aside from interstate state cooperation, there must be a strong understanding of the goals within states – from the district to the national level.
- Implementation of SDGs lies with individual states; developing countries must be given adequate resources to meet the targets.
- China will have to play a generous role in allowing and ensuring that other less developed countries in South and Central Asia develop to meet SDGs.
- At 2016 SAARC conference, parties must make a concentrated effort to accommodate data availability and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for forthcoming SDGs.
- Research institutes and civil society must be promoted for better availability of data and should incorporate Technology Facilitation Mechanisms.
- Countries must address common security and militancy issues and increase security cooperation bilaterally and multilaterally.
- Promote gender equality and women's empowerment through entrepreneurship.
- Incorporate social protection and financial inclusion in order to reduce inequalities, poverty and other deprivations within countries.
- There is a need to sustain broad based job creating economic growth to ensure structured and controlled urbanization.

Investment in Agriculture in South Asia and Scope for Regional Cooperation

There is a need to enhance environmental sustainability through low carbon climate resilient pathways to development. In addition, food security and hunger must be addressed by improving agricultural productivity through sustainable agriculture. Moreover, investment must be made in human capital and infrastructure to gain maximum benefits from regional trade in South Asia.

There should be adequate investments in Research and Development (R&D) given the potential of investment in agriculture to increase return on investment covering issues such as technology transfer, inter-sectoral linkages, development of physical infrastructure and gender-specific interventions. Lastly, focus on improved water resources management through collaboration on scientific research in terms of data collection and modelling, designing water allocation schemes and contingency plans for extreme events.

Role of media in Regional Corporation

- There is a pressing need to institutionalize the role of media within the framework of SAARC.
- Establishment of SAARC TV, radio, media portal and newspaper with the objective to educate and create awareness of all areas of human endeavour and bringing people of region closer to each other towards interdependence.
- Creation of a media university for the SAARC region.

Role of Women Entrepreneurs in Sustainable Development of South Asia

There is a need to promote/support women's business associations at national, regional, and international levels (learning opportunities, business promotion, and technology transfer). Social protection schemes, including health-care and retirement benefits, should be provided for female workers.

Women's involvement in entrepreneurship should be encouraged due to the long term benefits of inclusive growth. It will be imperative in achieving highest sustainable economic growth and employment and in raising living standard. Supplier diversity needs to be applied to public procurement (e.g., USA where government entities must procure at least 5% from women-owned firms and South Africa). Increased access of skills development and trainings for women entrepreneurs, along with affordable and easy access health care and child care facilities, will also help improve productivity.

Competition Reforms and Sustainable Development

- Competition reforms should be designed to strengthen its links with economic growth, industrialization and job creation.
- Application of competition policy should be done through a broad and flexible framework in DCs, and synergised with other government policies and priorities such as industrial policy, investment policy, IPR policy, trade policy, etc.

Regional Cooperation for Disaster Risk Management in South Asia

- Formation of a functional regional Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) mechanism. There is an urgent need
for a regional DRR mechanism that can be immediately and effectively mobilized during the time of crises.

- Streamlining the **regional functionality** of the SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC) in New Delhi.
- SAARC should work together with other developing countries and regions to ensure that financial and other supports—including appropriate technologies—actually come to the region.
- With reasonable financing, SAARC can shift from a retrospective, post-disaster approach to an anticipatory way of thinking about and confronting the disasters.
- The **SAARC Development Fund (SDF)** can be another plausible means to support the SDMC and implementation of SFDRR in South Asia. The US$300 million fund founded in 2005 is yet to start work on its infrastructure and economic windows. Disasters as a cross-cutting issue is important for all three windows of SDF.
- SAARC countries should also cooperate by sharing best practice in development planning and policy that reduce disaster risks.
- Creation of a sense of urgency and prioritization among policy-makers with regard to regional cooperation in disaster risk reduction and management.

### Eighteenth Sustainable Development Conference and Eighth South Asia Economic Summit
#### Policy Recommendations: Day 3

farmer demands, and involve farmers from all levels through appropriate policies, implementation, subsidies, etc.

For sustainable development, steps need to be taken for households that suffer from low caloric consumption and take loans to meet basic needs. In order to ensure **sustainable food production**, there is a need to ensure **sustained supply of food**, energy and water, to keep up with increase in population growth and urbanization. Lastly, **integration of polices** is essential in order to minimize trade-offs and increase collaborations among public and private sector at multiple levels.

**Human Development and Governance for Inclusive and Sustainable Development**

- Improved **governance** is necessary for inclusive and sustainable development, along with an increase in development spending.
- State must take steps to improve **service delivery**, especially in resource management; and, control national population growth rate.
- Generating **employment** is essential to avoid turning the demographic dividend into a demographic disaster.
- Equitable **power structure** (particularly in rural areas) is a necessary condition for social change.

**South Asia Women Parliamentarians in Women Empowerment**

- The **Women Parliamentarian Caucus (WPC)** and Women Parliamentarian Network on national as well on regional (South Asia) basis should be formed.
- There should be **monitoring committee** on women parliamentarian issues
- **Active role of media** is very important to highlight issues facing parliamentarians.
- Men should be brought on board to speak for women's rights, as women play a crucial role in regional peace building.

**Shared History of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh: How to Overcome the Controversies?**

Mainstream **curriculum** which is currently giving way to biased narratives from both countries should be changed. To find a solution to the conflicts, cordial **people-to-people relations** should be developed and controversies must be ignored.

History affects economy, and therefore a **strong theoretical framework** is needed to explain the distribution of power in the history of Pakistan and Bangladesh. The relationship of citizens with the state should be strong which will further help us in alleviating conflicts between **narratives**.

**Victimology of Crime and Terrorism: Lessons for South Asia**

- There is a pressing need for **institutional development**, such as the formation of a National Office of Victim Services.
- The formation and enactment of a **National Law** on Victims of Crime (Victims' Bill of Rights) is needed for combating crimes and acts of terror. There is also a need for Capacity Building of law & enforcement persons.
- A **national commitment** by political leaders must be made in international norms and instruments including UN conventions.
- **Laws and regulations** to be proposed such that they are redressed; best practices of foreign countries to be followed such as how the victims can be compensated, monetary or required information.
There is a need to integrate socio policies with economics aspect in climate change and migration policy making.

South Asia Environment Outlook (SAEO) 2009 must be taken forward and updated in real time with outcome of COP 21 Paris.

Technical Committee on Environment should meet to develop short term and long term plans of action on environment.

Develop SAARC Climate Change Strategy & Plan by integrating strategic plans of member countries. Create SAARC body for its monitoring and implementation.

Conference organizers should form an Environment Group of all 8 countries to develop comprehensive plan for submission to SAARC as a way forward on these recommendations and act as Advisory body to SAARC Environment Technical Committee.

Rising Inequality in Asia and Role of Fiscal Policies to Reduce Inequalities

There is a need to make capital expenditures on human development, especially in education, health, public transport, and utilities so that inequalities can be reduced. A decrease in indirect taxation and a rise in direct taxes will help redistribute wealth equally.

Ensure transparency and corruption; and implement land reforms to redistribute state land.

Enforce minimum wage for higher labour productivity.

Food Security in Pakistan

A higher percentage of GDP should be allocated for food security issues, along with investment in awareness-raising among the community. Goals and targets should be based on authentic data (through census). Also, there is a need to point out food insecurity vulnerability zones to recognize...

Eighteenth Sustainable Development Conference and Eighth South Asia Economic Summit

Policy Recommendations: Day 4

Compiled by Ms Hira Mira, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan

Securing Livelihoods, Revival of Markets in Post-Conflict Situations

The role of middle man and market management systems in post conflict situations needs to be institutionalized. Apart from strengthening the capacities of agricultural producers, it is pertinent to develop entrepreneurial skills to reduce exploitation by producers due to high bargaining power.

Local value system of any country should be taken into account during formulation and amendment of policies, to adequately accommodate women, minorities and other marginalized groups. Involvement of private sector in post conflict areas will also help in revival of markets and bring steady growth.

Water, Sustainability, Equity and Security

- SAARC Agreement & Protocol should be signed for meteorological stations for sharing weather data and information.
- GLOF early warning systems installed in the SAARC countries should allow data sharing at regional level.
- A SAARC water fund for institutes can assist research, capacity building and public-private partnership projects.
- Create SAARC water institute to undertake joint research projects for award of SAARC PhD degrees.

- Collaboration through changing mindset with new policy, regulatory provisions and institutional arrangement are essential to promote water cooperation.
- There is a need for information sharing and GIS database development.
- A water treaty between Afghanistan and Pakistan is necessary to avoid future conflicts.
- Technical and financial support by global community and development partners must be provided for strategic and programme planning and implementation.

Role of Development Partners in a Changing South Asia

Countries need to work for collective issues in the diverse South Asian region, with special focus on economic cooperation. Imbalances between civil and military leaderships pose serious challenges. Regional cooperation among countries needs to be used as a tool to address challenges. World Bank is focusing on cooperation between countries for energy connectivity.

Internal issues and conflicts between the countries are hurdles in the way of achieving sustainable development goals. Climate change and youth employment are two of the pressing challenges in the South Asian region. Knowledge gaps in South Asia need to be filled.

There is a need to initiate subsidiary social development programmes to combat rising social inequalities currently not addressed at the regional level. The key to addressing...
social inequities is to address fiscal issues at hand.

Data and evidence for informed policy making in social sectors

Localized data for localized solutions is the need of the hour. Targets should be set as achievable rather than popularizing large scale numbers for hype. Moreover, the drive for evidence based policy making should come from the local people and public whom the policies impact directly.

Data collectors should set national standards which are also in line with international data standards to allow for better comparability. Academia should use data collected for further analysing situations and brief policy makers accordingly.

It is also important that policy makers are more open to suggestions from academia and work to improve local indicators. Interaction between data collectors and academia will also assist in conveying the right message to policymakers.

Religious Minorities in South Asia

The Parliament must have representation of all the religious minorities including Ahmedis, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, etc., and each should be allotted seats according to their population ratio. The state should take measures to revise national school curricula to make sure that it is free of hate speech and intolerance towards religious minorities.

To improve the system, investigations carried out by police should be supervised by a judicial officer. There is a need to constitute a national commission that could address the issues of minorities’ education.
SDPI social media team tweeted live for both the mega events, i.e. the Eighteenth Sustainable Development Conference titled “Securing Peace and Prosperity” and the Eighth South Asia Economic Summit titled “Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Development in South Asia”. Hastags were #SDC2015 and #SAES2015 respectively and were at the Pakistan's top trends. Our top mentions were from the chairperson PTI, Mr. Imran Khan's official Facebook page. Mr. Khan was the chief guest at the closing plenary of the Eighteenth Sustainable Development Conference. Within one week video package got 87,952 views on his page. Another major mentioned was of live show with Sana Mirza, Anchor Jaag TV.

Top tweets earned 15.1K impressions
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- South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE)
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- SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Eighth South Asia Economic Summit (SAES) Organizers:

- Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Pakistan
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SDPI's Eighteenth Sustainable Development Conference
(SDC) 2015

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The Eighth South Asia Economic Summit (SAES) 2015
partners:

Eighth South Asia Economic Summit (SAES) Organizers:
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In collaboration with:
SDC & SAES 2015 in Photos
SDC & SAES 2015 in Photos
Group photo of SDPI staff at the conclusion of the SDC and SAES 2015