

## Water, Energy and Food Security, key for achieving SDGs in Dryland Regions



Picture 1 (Left picture) Mr Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Ministry of Planning and Development (left), Prof Shahbaz Khan, UNESCO (middle) and Prof Soontak Lee, Distinguished Professor Yeungnam University (right), (middle picture) H.E. Mr. Takashi Kurai, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan and (right picture) H.E. Dato' Dr. Hasrul Sani Mujtabar, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan .

Rawalpindi, 23 November 2016: with the generous support of the Malaysian and the Japanese governments, UNESCO and PMAS-Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi organized the **International Conference: Asia Pacific Policy Dialogue on Water, Energy and Food Security for Poverty Alleviation in Dryland Regions**. 200 participants consisting of policy makers, scientists, academicians, other experts, stakeholders and students participated in this forum. They gathered to discuss and explore new dimensions to increase water and food security and alleviate poverty in the resource deficient dryland regions worldwide, in Asia and the Pacific region, and particularly in Pakistan. 15 international experts from 10 countries (Afghanistan, Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Philippines) participated in this 3-day event.

The Conference was graced with the presence of Mr Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Ministry of Planning and Development. Other dignitaries present were Mr. Sheikh Aftab Ahmad, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Dr. Muhammad Najeeb Naqi Khan, Minister for Finance, Health Planning and Development, Government of Pakistan Administered Kashmir, Mr Rajab Ali Khan Baloch, Parliamentary Secretary National Food Security and Resources, H.E. Mr. Takashi Kurai, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan and H.E. Dato' Dr. Hasrul Sani Mujtabar, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan. They highly appreciated the initiative taken by UNESCO to strengthen partnerships and share knowledge on water, energy and food security towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ms Vibeke Jensen, Director, UNESCO Islamabad, Prof Shahbaz Khan, Director, UNESCO Jakarta and Prof Dr Rai Niaz Ahmad, Vice Chancellor of PMAS-AAUR, the co-organizers of the conference, delivered the opening and welcome remarks.



*Picture 2 Inauguration session*

The first technical session “National and Global Dialogue: Pakistan Vision 2025 and UN Agenda 2030” chaired by Prof. Dr. Shahbaz Khan, Director and Representative, UNESCO Regional Science Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, set up the scene for the discussion of the 3-days event on “Asia Pacific Policy Dialogue on Water, Energy and Food Security for Poverty Alleviation in Dryland Regions”. Renowned international experts from six countries (Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, and Republic of Korea) in the field of policies for sustainable development, water, natural disaster, nexus approaches and international cooperation (JICA) and Pakistan Planning Commission represented by Mr Nasir Gilani discussed with the audience on how the SDGs implementation has been implemented in Pakistan development plan with Pakistan Vision 2025. The international experts emphasised on what can be transposed to Pakistan from good practices and lessons in the field of water security, water pollution, urban water management, the role needed to be played by universities in filling the gap between science and practices, on how to attain social inclusiveness or set integrative disaster management as well as understanding the logical flow of the SDGs enabling their efficient interlinked implementation.



*Picture 3 Panellists of the session “National and Global Dialogue: Pakistan Vision 2025 and UN Agenda 2030”.*

Prof. Dr. Shahbaz Khan (UNESCO), highlighted UNESCO’s bilateral cooperation and partnership particularly with Japan and Malaysia. Through Japan Funds-in-Trust, UNESCO and the Japanese

Government are assisting in the implementation of UNESCO Natural Sciences programmes in the region i.e. International Hydrological Programme (IHP), Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, Global Geoparks Network as well as use of ICT to connect high-level universities through the CONNECT-Asia programme. Through the Malaysia-UNESCO Cooperation Programme (MUCP), UNESCO and Malaysia aim to strengthen the South-South Cooperation (SSC) by placing particular emphasis on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Asia and the Pacific as well as Africa. To date, 29 projects have been generously supported through the Malaysia Funds-in-Trust (MFIT) covering all five major programmes of UNESCO.

The second technical session on “Disaster Management” was co-chaired by Mr Ahmad Kamal (NDMA) and Ms Patricia McPhillips (UNESCO). Six speakers from Japan (JICA, ICHARM) and Pakistan (NDMA, PMD, SACAN, FA&E) presented processes and mechanisms at international, regional and national level in reducing disaster risk and augmenting institutional and community based mitigation and resilience capacity to natural disaster. In particular the Heart of Asia Initiative was presented as placing disaster risk management as one of the enablers of Afghanistan stability and subsequent regional peace. The new strategy of International Flood Initiative, a multi-UN global initiative emphasizing on integrated flood management was presented linking different water use and management of flood waters. Then Pakistani and Japanese national settings for DRR were reported. During the discussion it was highlighted that climate change is making preparation based on historical data not reliable anymore therefore pre-during- post disaster response for flood and drought has been rethought in Sendai Framework for DRR with an emphasis on sharing real-time data. The participants particularly emphasized the transboundary data sharing importance and necessity for effective DRR and the role of UN agencies to promote transboundary data sharing and facilitate regional mechanism.

On the second day, two major sessions were delivered. The first session chaired by Prof Soontak Lee (Yeungnam University, Rep. of Korea) focused on “Nexus Approaches and Livelihood” and how in particular UNESCO sites like UNESCO Global Geoparks, MAB programme Biosphere Reserves, World Heritage sites or IHP HELP (Hydrology for the Environment, Life, and Policy) river basins, Ecohydrology sites and finally Sustainability Science approach management plan and development can trigger and establish the basis for socially inclusive sustainable development. It was recommended that a regional mechanism and platform for sharing UNESCO sites good practices, know-how, successful experiences in local development shall be strengthened, for instance by creating, maintaining and enhancing regional and sub regional networks in South and Central Asia. Food security and how to achieve it through the nexus approaches was also discussed extensively.



Picture 4 Nexus Approaches and Livelihood session keynote speakers and panellists.

The second very important session focused on water planning for nexus approach chaired by Dr Ashraf Mohammad, chairman PCRWR. Prof Soontak Lee as other speakers in the session emphasised that achieving long-term water security is a necessary condition for sustainable development at local, national and regional levels and it is only possible through integrative water planning at all levels. Also because water is essential to strategic sectors such as energy and food, efficient water management and planning needs to be supported by integrative, nexus approach based, socially inclusive water policies and governance. Effective water planning examples from Australia, China, Malaysia, Pakistan and the Philippines were presented. Representative from Afghanistan Ministry of Environment and Water also explained how water management was challenged in Afghanistan due to the lack of integrated water planning.



Picture 5 Launching of Water Planning Publication (UNESCO, WWF and ADB) with Mr Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Ministry of Planning and Development(right), Prof Shahbaz Khan, UNESCO (middle) and Prof Soontak Lee (Distinguished Professor Yeungnam University, President of International Hydrologic Environmental Society (IHES), Governor of World Water Council).

UNESCO launched the new series of water planning books co-published with AND and WWF "Strategic Water Planning: International Experiences and Practices" in the presence of H.E. Mr Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reform, Prof Shahbaz Khan, UNESCO and Prof Soontak Lee, Distinguished Professor Yeungnam University, President of International Hydrologic Environmental Society (IHES), Governor of World Water Council.

On the third day, 25 November 2016, the experts of the last session “Energy and Nexus Approaches” discussed on how energy security should be considered through its interrelations with water and food security for synergetic actions. Also it was noted that innovative solutions for sustainable development are available and shall be promoted (e.g. hydroelectricity). Moreover, as a priority sector in national development plans, strong political commitment and awareness of global trends are essential for efficient energy policies development and implementations. Finally, it was reminded that transboundary and regional collaboration should be enhanced to fully maximize the energy potential of the region.

The closing session was attended by chief guest Mr Rajab Ali Khan Baloch, Parliamentary Secretary National Food Security and Resources. A series of 26 recommendations around the seven key areas of discussions were presented by Prof Shahbaz Khan, UNESCO, to all participants and it was agreed these recommendations from this regional conference will be diffused to all countries in the Asia and the Pacific region to raise awareness and share findings and foster concerted and collaborative partnership among drylands of the region and beyond.



*Picture 6 Group picture “International Conference: Asia Pacific Policy Dialogue on Water, Energy and Food Security for Poverty Alleviation in Dryland Regions”*

News coverage:

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/islamabad/24-Nov-16/moot-mulls-over-ways-to-ensure-water-food-security-and-alleviation-of-poverty>

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/167221-Conference-on-water-energy-and-food-security-held-at-AAUR>

<http://thepakmedia.com/water-energy-food-policy-conference-held-unesco-arid-agriculture-university/>

<http://www.thefrontierpost.com/article/418163/three-day-conference-begins/>

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1242391/seminar-held-create-awareness-food-security/>

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/11/23/city/water-energy-and-food-policy-conference-held-by-unesco-and-arid-agriculture-university/>

<http://pakobserver.net/call-to-preserve-forests-water-energy-reservoirs/>

For further information contact [s.khan@unesco.org](mailto:s.khan@unesco.org) and visit:

<http://jfit-for-science.asia/asia-pacific-policy-dialogue-on-water-energy-and-food-security-for-poverty-alleviation-in-dryland-regions/>

<http://mucp-mfit.org/asia-pacific-policy-dialogue-on-water-energy-and-food-security-for-poverty-alleviation-in-dryland-regions/>