

Brief for VNR presentation
HLPF Event – 16 July 2019

10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Opening Statement

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct honour to present Pakistan's Voluntary National Review at the High Level Political Forum. This is an indication not just of our commitment to fully implement the SDGs but our confidence in our will and ability to achieve the SDGs and indeed of the progress we are making in attaining our targets

Our efforts have accelerated dramatically after the advent of our new government led by Prime Minister Imran Khan. In his very first address to the country, my Prime Minister committed himself to advancing many of the goals set out by the SDGs. For the first time in our history the country's chief executive declared his resolution to promote human development through a people-centered, inclusive and democratic development path. Subsequently the government began to execute his vision of leaving no one behind by a series of economic, social and environmental policy measures.

SDGs - Political Commitment at Highest Level

- Pakistan is fully committed to achieving the SDGs.
- In February 2016, the Parliament of Pakistan unanimously approved the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the 'National Development Agenda'.
- National SDGs Framework approved by the National Economic Council and serving as a guiding document for all provinces
- For localization, numerous workshops in each districts were organized to sensitize all relevant stakeholders on the SDGs and provide technical guidance to line departments at local level for planning, budgeting and measuring performance
- As an important step, Pakistan translated the global goals into national goals and targets, keeping in view current development needs, future priorities and global challenges such as poverty and climate change.

Adoption of SDGs as Pakistan's National Development Agenda: *SDG Mainstreaming and Institutionalization at all levels and tiers of Governance*

- While moving towards more connected, more liberal/progressive, and more responsible era of governance, we are complying with innovative and technology-based initiatives to strengthen institutions and bureaucratic systems.
- We have three tiers of government: National Provincial, and District.
- We have also adopted bottom-up and top-down approach to ensure the implementation of the SDGs. At the top we have parliamentary SDG secretariat and Parliamentary Task Force on SDG for oversight and at the very bottom we have focal persons at the district level.
- More important is the involvement of communities in these initiatives and empowerment of local government – both administrative and financial as these local bodies are the ultimate key to mainstreaming and executing the 2030 Agenda and supporting them to do so is the future of the Agenda in Pakistan.

Pakistan VNR 2019: Reflecting high priority initiatives for advancing the SDG Agenda

- The country is aligning its policies to SDGs by integrating the four dimensions i.e. economic, social, governance and environment.
- Pakistan presented its progress along 8 SDGs in its first VNR report. The selection is based on our national priorities in terms of poverty and hunger, health and gender equality.
- It is also based on our international commitments including clean energy and climate actions and partnership for achieving all these goals.

Our vision and priorities for Sustainable Development: *Leaving no one behind*

- SDGs provide a major shift for which the existing architecture of governance also needed to be coherent and consistent with the SDGs.
- As countries across the globe are designing policies and putting greater emphasis on redistribution of economic benefits as well as combating climate change for SDG achievement, Pakistan is also re aligning its policies and programs to the global discourse of poverty reduction, knowledge economy, climate action through strong partnerships.

Effective Governance Systems: *For translating political vision into reality*

- Recognizing that strong institutions are key to achieving SDGs, Pakistan is embracing on strengthening institutions and ensuring meritocracy. We are committed to promoting transparency and accountability, systemic changes in social sector service delivery and revamping governance institutions. We are also committed to devolve power at the lowest possible level of governance following the good accountable practices.
- National Socioeconomic Registry being updated to ensure that the statistical systems, capacities, methodologies and mechanisms are in place to track progress and ensure accountability

- BISP data collection process instituted to include the most excluded and marginalized populations, which were often not represented or under-represented in current national data collection.

Joining the global efforts to alleviate Poverty

- For the first time in the history of Pakistan a separate ministry for poverty alleviation and social safety has been established to accomplish Prime Imran Khan's vision to pull people out of poverty. Ehsaas program is the largest program launched in Pakistan with an allocation of Rs. 190 billion to address poverty. *Ehsaas* means compassion, which is the spirit of humanity.
- Ehsaas is for the extreme poor, for orphans, widows, homeless, disabled, jobless, poor farmers, poor labourers, for sick who can't afford treatment, for the undernourished mothers and newborns, for students from low income backgrounds, for poor elderly citizen, transgender and especially for poor women.
- It brings under one umbrella multiple social safety programs for enhanced coordination and improved efficiency.
- It is designed to house cross cutting interlinkages; being implemented by 26 federal Ministries.
- Ehsaas focuses on (i) making government system work for the poor (ii) improving safety nets (iii) human capital development and (iv) and creating jobs for livelihood.
- Initiatives under *Ehsaas* include:
 - ✓ Affordable housing schemes,
 - ✓ Sehat Insaf Cards for universal health insurance for 15 million poor,
 - ✓ *Tahafaz* which is financial assistance for protection against catastrophic events,
 - ✓ pension scheme for the informal sector workers
 - ✓ Innovation Challenge and venture capital funding for employment generation
 - ✓ *Kifalat* - for the vulnerable against catastrophic expenditures.
 - ✓ Disabled and transgender: All programmes include special quota for persons with disabilities.

Promoting Gender Participation: A major lever impacting Pakistan's progress towards the SDGs

- Gender inequality is indeed a major deterrent to economic empowerment and economic growth. Our women constitute 48.8% of the population. Currently with only 25% of women in the labour workforce against 85% men, we strongly feel that ensuring equal gender participation will be one of our strongest drivers for sustained economic growth. Recent IMF study estimates that closing the gender gap in Pakistan could boost GDP by 30 percent.
- Ehsaas our poverty alleviation Program is also mainstreaming gender in multiple for harnessing the full potential of our female workforce and their empowerment.

- Our recent initiatives are aimed at enhancing gender participation while having a cross cutting impact on full range of SDGs. Amongst the many these include:
 - ✓ financial and digital inclusion of 6 million women through the one woman one bank account policy,
 - ✓ *interest free micro loans* under *Ehsaas* graduation programme, *their* joint ownership in *PM housing program*, *health and nutrition initiatives* focusing on women’s wellbeing, 50% education scholarships for girls.

Economic Drivers of Sustainable Development

- PKR 91.0 billion were allocated in the annual national budget for social sector development schemes including:
 - ✓ Education – PKR 33.0 billion
 - ✓ Health & Population – PKR 30.0 billion
 - ✓ SDGs – PKR 24.0 billion
 - ✓ Others – PKR 6.0 billion
- Funds allocated for Agricultural Development – Rs. 260 billion
- Funds allocated for housing construction - PKR 5.0 billion
- Innovative financing targets are set at PKR 250 billion
- Revenue target is set for PKR 5.6 trillion

Pakistani Youth – Our strongest driver for sustained economic growth

- 64% percent of the country’s population is under 29 years and 30 % between the 15 – 29 years.
- We are focusing on transforming Pakistan’s economy by developing and utilizing intellectual capital. We are determined to investing in knowledge and products based on cutting edge technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Big Data & Cloud Computing, Internet of Things, Nanotechnology and Biotechnology.
- Academia, Industry and Government will join hands to progress on this path by promoting entrepreneurial culture, establishing Science and Technology / Industrial Parks, Incubators and Accelerators.
- Following the spirit of SDGs “equity” we are geared towards balanced and equitable regional development. Special importance will be given to the backward and remote areas;
- more than Rs. 50 billion has been allocated in the Federal PSDP 2019-20 Fiscal year.

Our vision for a digital Pakistan: *An enabler for transforming economy*

- The government is set to revitalise digital economy. It will unleash the exports potential of IT sector, freelancing and various services; IT exports are set to increase by \$10 billion over the next 5 years.
- Cellular services in Pakistan have increased their penetration from 133 million in 2016 to 161 million of the population in 2019. We intend to increase it to 100 percent over the next couple of years.
- We had 32 million internet users in 2016 and the number has now increased to 70 million in 2019
- Digital expansion is expected to help us in provision of social services to communities in remote and underserved areas of our country
- We will soon be launching multi-communication satellite, which is expected to contribute to socio-economic uplift of the country by its direct contribution to SDGs related to Good Health, Quality Education, Economic Growth, Innovation & Infrastructure and an indirect contribution towards No Poverty, Sustainable Cities & Communities and Climate Action

Climate Action - Clean Green Pakistan: An opportunity to change our development from gray to green

- Despite miniscule (0.8%) share in GHG emissions, Pakistan is allocating its resources for climate action and is fully committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45 per cent over the next decade.
- The Government launched the 'Clean and Green Pakistan' campaign to make Pakistan pollution-free and increase its forest cover. Water conservation and storage is a priority agenda. Alongside multiple climate-resilient food security measures are being instituted.
- The country is using climate change as an opportunity to reorient its development from gray to green through upgrading billion tree tsunami in KP to 10 Billion Tree Tsunami which will cover the entire country.
- Billion Tree Tsunami was funded by public money and was widely acknowledged by UN Environment, Bonn Challenge and other International Bodies. Pakistan is looking forward to international partnerships for realization of its 10 billion tree tsunami initiative
- Pakistan will also be presenting its "Sustainable Growth, Livelihoods and Eco-System Restoration" initiative at the forthcoming UNSG's 2019 Climate Action Summit

Leveraging on Eco Friendly Tourism: *Respect for Environment & People*

- Pakistan has lots of potential for eco-friendly tourism.
- We are aiming to increase our **forest cover** from 5.0% to 7.0% by the year 2030;
- For 2019-20 we have allocated \$810 million for the **Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Program**

- With an aim to **boost tourism industry** and foreign investment, the government has a new visa policy encouraging tourists from 50 countries to avail themselves of visa-on-arrival facility and providing e-visa to citizens of 175 countries.
- 19 **Integrated Tourism Zones** are being established in various parts of the country
- Pakistan provides opportunities for religious tourism.

Strengthening partnerships for Sustainable Development

- Partnerships is the key for us to proceed further. It is imperative to collaborate for implementing the agenda 2030 for sustainable development.
- We look forward to building strong partnerships with global community for:

Strengthening investments for population planning

Enabling policies, building implementation and monitoring mechanisms for population planning

Leveraging the demographic dividend through investment in youth.

For the next three decades, Pakistan will continue to be a younger country. We are keen to develop partnerships for exploiting this as our strongest drivers for sustained economic growth by investing in their education and developing their skills for gainful employment both nationally and internationally.

Enhancing capacities for policy coherence for climate action

Policy coherence for climate action calls for regional and global partnership as no country can alone battle against the global warming. To overcome the issue of transboundary emissions, Pakistan is taking a collective and inclusive approach and is keen to develop partnership with not only the neighboring countries but also is keen to exploit learnings from the successful global initiatives.

Introducing innovative sustainable farming techniques

For increasing agricultural produce, build resilience to climate change and reduce post-harvest losses.

Exploiting prospects for technology transfer for economic growth

We recognize technology as key lever for driving our economic growth, defining global value chains and competing in the global market.

We welcome partnerships to leverage technology while helping us build local indigenous solutions, boost our exports and creating equitable employment opportunities.

Dedicated budget of Rs. 1388.3 billion for Scaling up regional connectivity

Pakistan has dedicated Rs. 1388.3 billion for the development of roads, air, rail and port infrastructure to improve regional connectivity over next five years

We are focusing on:

- ✓ enhancing regional connectivity through road networks, aviation
- ✓ exploring partnerships for building corridors to boost trade, investment, culture and tourism, institutional and people cooperation
- ✓ expanding cooperation and exchange of major surplus production

To sum up, our national approach towards advancing the SDGs implementation is anchored in political commitment and ownership, institutional readiness, aided by technology and facilitated by finance, both internal and external. We look forward to receiving feedback, learning from good practices and insights from Governments, institutions, civil society and other stakeholders.

Let me conclude by once again reiterating Pakistan's commitment to implement the SDGs by effective coordination among all stakeholders. We are convinced that public private partnerships are the most efficient and inclusive way to accomplish our targets with the government engaging and involving the private sector, civil society, media, think tanks and academia

Our collective goal is to ensure a better life for our people and leave no one behind to create the foundations of a prosperous, equitable and just society

Thank you.