

## **Regional Parliamentarians' Conference on Gender Empowerment for a Green Economy**

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Asian Forum of Parliamentarians and Population Development -  
Standing Committee on Gender Equality and Women's  
Empowerment

*12-13 August 2024, Islamabad, Pakistan*

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## Asian Forum of Parliamentarians and Population Development

### (AFPPD) Standing Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

*The following report covers the discussions and takeaways from the events of “Regional Parliamentarians’ Conference on Gender Empowerment for a Green Economy” Islamabad, Pakistan. 12-13 August 2024*

#### SUMMARY

The Regional Parliamentarians’ Meeting on Gender Empowerment for a Green Economy was convened in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on 12 August 2024. This significant event was co-hosted by the Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, in collaboration with the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) and the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) through the Japan Trust Fund (JTF).

The meeting brought together over 300 delegates, including parliamentarians, government officials, representatives from international organizations, NGOs, youth groups, and academia, from 20 countries. The primary focus was to exchange and discuss best practices in policies, legislation, and programs aligned with the ICPD30 goals, particularly concerning gender equality, women’s empowerment, and climate change. Discussions centred on strengthening policies, systems, and services to enhance investment in youth, eliminate gender inequality, and empower women and girls, ensuring their active participation in decision-making processes.

#### Thematic Coverage

The Regional Parliamentarians’ Meeting on Gender Empowerment for a Green Economy explored a comprehensive range of themes central to the intersection of gender equality, women's empowerment, and sustainable development. Thematic sessions included in-depth discussions on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action with a focus on Gender Equality, the critical role of women in responding to global crises such as climate change, and the necessity of enhancing women's economic participation. These sessions delved into issues such as gender-based violence, women's political and economic empowerment, and the need for inclusive policies that prioritize investment in youth and women. The discussions underscored the persistent challenges and emerging opportunities in achieving gender equality and highlighted the importance of legislative frameworks, policy reforms, and actionable strategies to empower women as leaders and change-makers in their communities.

#### Forum’s Inspiration

The inspiration for this forum is deeply rooted in the mission and vision of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), a broad network of 33 National Committees representing parliamentarians across the Asia-Pacific and Central Asia regions. Established in 1982, AFPPD serves as a unifying hub for parliamentary involvement in addressing critical population issues, advocating for policies that promote gender equality, women’s empowerment, youth development, and the well-being of the ageing population.

Guided by international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the International Conference on Population and

## Asian Forum of Parliamentarians and Population Development

Development and its Programme of Action (ICPD PA), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), AFPPD strives to create a future where all individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, have equal rights and opportunities. The forum embodies this commitment by bringing together parliamentarians and stakeholders to address the pressing challenges of our time, such as climate change, economic inequality, and social injustice.

AFPPD's role in organizing parliamentarians' meetings and seminars is crucial to fostering dialogue, coordinating policies, and holding governments accountable for their commitments to population and development issues. This forum, in particular, draws inspiration from AFPPD's long-standing efforts to ensure that demographic changes and population issues are integrated into sustainable development planning. By advocating for increased financial resources and robust policy frameworks, the forum seeks to empower women and girls, enhance youth participation in leadership roles, and support the ageing population, ultimately striving to build a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

The forum's inspiration is further amplified by the collective resolve to accelerate progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment in the face of global crises. By leveraging AFPPD's extensive network and advocacy experience, this event aims to catalyse transformative action, inspire innovative solutions, and strengthen the resolve of parliamentarians to champion the rights and well-being of all individuals in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

### **Visibility and Impact**

The forum aimed to enhance the visibility of gender-related issues within the broader context of sustainable development, leveraging the extensive network and advocacy strength of the AFPPD. With its established presence across 33 National Committees in the Asia-Pacific and Central Asia regions, AFPPD played a pivotal role in amplifying the voices of vulnerable populations, including women, children, youth, and the ageing, ensuring their concerns were central to the global discourse.

Through high-level discussions, expert panels, and interactive sessions, the forum sought to influence policy-makers and mobilize resources towards gender-responsive policies that align with international frameworks such as CEDAW, the ICPD Programme of Action, and the SDGs. The meeting not only aimed to highlight successful models of gender empowerment but also to advocate for concrete, context-specific national targets that reflect the diverse needs of the region.

The impact of the forum extended beyond immediate discussions, aiming to shape national and regional agendas, foster collaborations, and hold governments accountable for their commitments to gender equality and population policies. By integrating the insights and recommendations from parliamentarians and stakeholders, the forum sought to ensure that gender equality, women's empowerment, and the inclusion of vulnerable groups remain high on the agenda of sustainable development planning. Ultimately, the forum endeavoured to leave a lasting imprint on the policy landscape, driving sustained efforts to create a more equitable and just future for all.

**SESSION-WISE REPORT**

**Welcome Remarks: Hon. Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination**



The welcome remarks were delivered by Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, who outlined Pakistan's strategic approach to embedding gender equality and sustainable development within the framework of a green economy. Ms. Alam emphasized that the green economy was not merely an environmental strategy but a transformative approach aimed at fostering sustainable economic growth while addressing social inequalities, particularly gender inequality.

Ms. Alam underscored the indispensable role of women, who represented half of the global population, in the success of the green economy. Despite being disproportionately affected by climate change, women possessed critical knowledge and skills in managing natural resources and leading community resilience efforts. She highlighted the importance of recognizing women's dual roles as both victims of environmental degradation and as potent agents of change driving sustainable development.

Ms. Alam also emphasized Pakistan's leadership and contributions to regional and international efforts, particularly in the context of gender equality and sustainable development. She highlighted the legacy of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's significant contributions to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994, which continued to guide Pakistan's proactive policies on population and development. She noted the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), co-founded by Pakistan, as a crucial platform for sharing best practices, building partnerships, and advocating for gender equality and sustainable development across the region.

In conclusion Ms. Alam reiterated that gender equality was not just a human rights issue but a cornerstone of sustainable development. She called for continued commitment to gender equality, sustainable development, and the well-being of future generations. Ms. Alam reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to work alongside regional and global partners to advance gender empowerment and environmental sustainability, emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts, regional dialogue, and the enactment of policies and laws that ensured

equal access to opportunities in the green economy. Ms. Alam positioned Pakistan as a key player in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fulfilling the promise of ICPD30, with a vision of turning a green and equitable future into a reality.

### **Opening Remarks: Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont, Secretary General of AFPPD**

Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont, Secretary General of AFPPD, highlighted that women are the most vital human resource in the pursuit of overcoming poverty and inequality—core objectives aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He underscored that achieving the 2030 Agenda is impossible without ensuring gender equality, as women are increasingly taking on decision-making roles globally. However, he acknowledged that progress has been uneven and slower in certain countries, particularly in areas of concern. AFPPD has been actively addressing these gender issues by fostering partnerships, developing frameworks, and implementing gender-focused legislation to drive progress in these weaker areas. Dr. Sirathranont emphasized that sharing various case studies could further support these efforts, helping to combat gender inequality. He called upon Parliament members, communities, and the general public to unite in driving change for the betterment of the country and its women.

### **Opening Remarks: Hon. Toshiko Abe, MP, State Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology**

Hon. Toshiko Abe, MP, State Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, emphasized that women are the most vital human resource and crucial to overcoming poverty and inequality, which are key targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She noted that the 2030 Agenda cannot be fully realized without achieving gender equality, as women increasingly make decisions on a global scale. However, progress has been uneven, with certain countries lagging in specific areas. The AFPPD has been proactive in addressing gender issues by forming partnerships, developing frameworks, and enacting gender legislation to drive progress in these weaker areas. The minister encouraged Parliamentarian members, communities, and the general public to unite in making a positive change for the country and its women, sharing case studies that could support this crucial initiative against gender inequality.

### **Opening Remarks: Ms. Latika Maskey Pradhan, Deputy Representative of UNFPA Pakistan**

Ms. Latika Maskey Pradhan, Deputy Representative of UNFPA Pakistan, emphasized the critical importance of promoting sustainable development through inclusive decision-making that actively involves communities. Despite ongoing efforts, gender equality remains a challenge, especially at the intersection of climate change and gender inequality. She highlighted that women play a pivotal role in driving a green economy, making their economic empowerment essential for progress. Addressing gender-based violence must also evolve, with the integration of technology being key to enhancing protection for women. Collaborations between UNFPA, the government, and other stakeholders, supported by the right strategies and policies, are vital for challenging and dismantling entrenched norms. UNFPA remains committed to advancing these policies and agendas to create a more equitable future.

### **Opening Remarks: Dr. Tabinda Sarosh, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Pathfinder International**

Dr. Tabinda Sarosh, Interim CEO of Pathfinder International, praised the AFPPD and the Ministry of Climate Change Pakistan for their efforts in convening the crucial conference focused on the intersection of population management, sustainable development, and resilience. She emphasized that women, girls, and vulnerable communities are on the frontlines of these challenges, and highlighted Pathfinder's mission to equip even the most marginalized populations with the tools needed for health, resilience, and a prosperous future. Dr. Sarosh underscored the importance of local, gender-centred solutions to address climate change and environmental degradation, emphasizing that the success of these efforts lies in the strong partnerships Pathfinder cultivates with communities, academia, and young leaders worldwide.

Pathfinder International's work, as outlined by Dr. Sarosh, focuses on strengthening health systems to withstand climate shocks, developing multisectoral partnerships, and promoting education and equity within society. She stressed that the decisions made today will shape tomorrow's solutions, and commended the Ministry of Climate Change Pakistan and AFPPD for building a platform for regional resilience and cooperation.

### **Keynote: H.E. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Speaker of the National Assembly of Islamic Republic of Pakistan**



His Excellency Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, the Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan, welcomed parliamentarians and distinguished guests from across the region to Islamabad, emphasizing the importance of regional collaboration for achieving gender empowerment and sustainable development. He expressed gratitude to Her Excellency Toshiko Abe, the State Minister of Japan, and other parliamentarians for their participation, underscoring the significance of their shared mission. The Honourable Speaker commended the efforts of Honourable Romina Khursheed Alam in organizing the event, noting that the theme, "Gender Empowerment for a Green Economy," was timely and essential. He highlighted the intertwined nature of gender equality and environmental sustainability, emphasizing the progress Pakistan has made in promoting gender equality through legislative and policy measures aligned with national development goals.

The Honourable Speaker further elaborated on Pakistan's commitment to combating climate change and promoting renewable energy. He proudly noted that the Parliament of Pakistan was the first in the world to fully transition to solar energy, reflecting the nation's dedication to a green economy. The Honourable Speaker highlighted Pakistan's role in international climate negotiations and its efforts to empower women, particularly in the National Assembly, where women lead three out of four parliamentary forums. He concluded by urging all participants to engage in constructive dialogue, take lessons back to their respective countries, and work towards building a future where women and girls thrive in a just and sustainable world.

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### Session 1 | Addressing Gender Equality in Context of ICPD30

*Chairperson: Hon. Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination*

#### **Speakers:**

- *Ms. Fauzia Viqar, FOSPAH, Pakistan*
- *Ms Saliha Ramay, UNFPA Pakistan*

#### **Session Overview**

Ms. Fauzia Viqar, from the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection Against Harassment (FOSPAH) in Pakistan, emphasized the critical importance of gender equality, highlighting the vast global resource disparity and the significant challenges women face. She noted that despite global efforts, including numerous gender-related reforms, the implementation remains inadequate, and the gender gap persists, potentially taking over a century to close. Ms. Viqar also addressed the economic and social inequalities that hinder women's progress, particularly in South Asia, where women's participation in the workforce and access to essential resources like education and technology are limited. She called for a rethinking of economic growth to ensure inclusivity, advocating for substantial investments in women's empowerment, creating gender-sensitive public policies, and promoting women in leadership to achieve true gender equality.

Ms. Saliha Ramay of UNFPA Pakistan outlined critical challenges to achieving gender equality, highlighting persistent issues such as gender-based violence, inadequate enforcement of protective laws, and the lack of comprehensive data, particularly regarding Sustainable Development Goal 5. She emphasized the detrimental effects of child marriage on girls' health and education, the low labour force participation of women, and the pressing need for youth empowerment. Additionally, Ms. Ramay called for greater access to sexual and reproductive health rights, stronger property rights for women, and improved digital access, particularly in rural areas, to close the gender gap and promote women's economic and social well-being.

#### **Key Takeaways**

- Women's participation in the labour force is low, particularly in the informal economy, leading to a loss of productivity.
- Access to sexual and reproductive health rights is limited, with less than 3% of women making autonomous health decisions.
- Gender equality is a critical global issue, with significant disparities in resource control and economic participation.



- Economic growth must be inclusive, with targeted investments in women's education, social safety nets, and business support.
- Public policies should create an enabling environment for women, addressing issues like workplace harassment and access to basic facilities.
- Promoting women in leadership and tackling social gender biases are essential for achieving true gender equality.
- Addressing the digital divide and improving data accuracy the gender gap index are necessary steps for progress.
- While strong legislation exists in many countries, implementation remains a challenge. Women need to be empowered at the grassroots level by educating them about their rights as enshrined in the constitutions.

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### Session 2 | Women's Role in Global Crisis: Climate Change and Security

*Chairperson: Hon Dashdondog Ganpat*

#### **Speakers:**

- *Hon. Ly Kimlieng, MP Cambodia*
- *Lydia Saloucou, President Africa Region, Pathfinder International*
- *Hon. Dr. Anara Naeem, MP Maldives*
- *Ms Guncha Annageldieva, Y-PEER International Coordinator*

#### **Session Overview**

Hon. Ly Kimlieng's speech focused on the urgent need for gender-responsive climate action in Cambodia, emphasizing the importance of raising awareness, investing in women's leadership, and advocating for gender-responsive budgeting and policy implementation. She highlighted the role of gender mainstreaming units in aligning with the Oslo Statement 2024 and addressing gender equality issues. Challenges such as capacity gaps, persistent inequalities, and inadequate data were noted, with proposed solutions including legislative reform, enhanced stakeholder engagement, improved policies in agriculture and energy sectors, and increased support for rural development and women's access to resources.

Lydia Saloucou, President of the Africa Region at Pathfinder International, shared her deep connection to gender empowerment, drawing from experiences in the Sahelian region. Pathfinder International prioritizes women and girls in its climate strategies, focusing on sustainable, locally-driven solutions. Saloucou highlighted that while women face disproportionate impacts from climate change, they are often underrepresented in decision-making roles. She cited successful Pathfinder initiatives in Tanzania, where women-led efforts in climate-smart agriculture and community regulations improved resilience and sustainability. Saloucou urged governments to ensure women's leadership in climate response and advocated for greater female participation in decision-making roles.

Hon. Dr. Anara Naeem, MP Maldives, thanked the organizers and emphasized the significance of Pledge No. 7 from the Oslo declaration, which underscores human rights during conflicts and calls for urgent protection of vulnerable groups. She highlighted the crucial role of women in climate change mitigation and their disproportionate suffering from climate-related disasters. Dr. Naeem also noted the underrepresentation of women in renewable energy sectors and stressed the effectiveness of women-led initiatives in building community

resilience. She advocated for increased female participation in peace and security efforts, conflict resolution, and countering violent extremism, while calling for gender-responsive policies and greater representation of women in global crisis management.

Ms. Guncha Annageldieva highlighted the urgent need to address climate change due to its critical impact on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and overall well-being. She emphasized that women facing vulnerability during crises are often subjected to sexual abuse and unintended pregnancies, exacerbated by cultural and religious biases. The scarcity of clean water further compounds these issues, making it essential to ensure secure access to vital resources. Addressing these challenges requires a clear distinction between cultural and religious differences and promoting practical, gender-responsive solutions.

### **Key Takeaways**

- The need for gender-responsive climate action in Cambodia, including raising awareness, investing in women's leadership for climate adaptation, and implementing gender-responsive budgeting, was emphasized.
  - The role of gender mainstreaming units, aligned with the Oslo Statement 2024, in addressing gender equality issues and the importance of legislative reforms were highlighted.
  - Challenges such as capacity gaps, persistent gender inequalities, and inadequate gender-disaggregated data were acknowledged, with proposed solutions including enhanced stakeholder engagement and improved policies in key sectors like agriculture and energy.
  - The pivotal role of women and girls in addressing climate challenges, leading local adaptation efforts, and participating in renewable energy and resilience projects was recognized.
  - The importance of protecting human rights, particularly for vulnerable groups during conflicts and crises, and ensuring women's involvement in peace, security, and crisis management was underscored.
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## **Session 3 | Role of Women in Economic Participation**

*Chair of Session: Hon. Pham Khanh Phong Lan, MP Vietnam*

### **Speakers:**

- *Hon. Jasmin Sri Wulan Sutomo, MP Indonesia*
- *Ms. Jayaa Jaggi, YPEER Pakistan*
- *Mr. Mohamed Abou Nar, Interim President, SA-MENA, Pathfinder International*
- *Dr. Durr-e-Nayab, Joint Director/Pro Vice Chancellor, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE)*

### **Session Overview**

Hon. Jasmin Sri Wulan Sutomo, MP Indonesia, highlighted Indonesia's economic progress, including achieving middle-income status and significant poverty reduction. Women's educational attainment surpasses that of men, yet their labour force participation is hindered by wage discrimination, inadequate protection in the informal sector, and additional child-rearing responsibilities. Women play diverse roles from traditional domestic work to various professional positions and own a significant portion of SMEs, which are vital to the economy. To address these issues, the speaker proposed promoting flexible working conditions,

improving access to childcare and maternity leave, enhancing infrastructure and digital access, and increasing the minimum marriage age to combat child marriage.

Ms. Jayaa Jaggi highlighted the significant challenges faced by women in rural and marginalized communities in Pakistan, including limited access to essential resources, inadequate infrastructure, and resistance in patriarchal environments. She noted the lack of digital literacy and limited educational and economic opportunities for these women, exacerbated by the absence of role models and mentors. Ms. Jaggi emphasized the need for stronger public-private partnerships, improved resource management, and increased inclusion of young women in leadership roles. She concluded by stressing the importance of collective efforts to bridge gaps in support and advocate for better access to education, digital literacy, and economic opportunities for young women.

Mr. Mohamed Abou Nar highlighted the critical role of women in driving economic participation, emphasizing its importance for sustainable development, and advancing a green economy. He outlined various forms of economic participation, including workforce inclusion, entrepreneurship, and leadership, which contribute to economic growth and resilience. Women's involvement in these areas brings diverse perspectives and innovative solutions essential for tackling global challenges. Pathfinder International's models include establishing "Green Clinics" to promote eco-friendly practices, community mobilization through climate change resilience efforts, and empowering women with financial autonomy and skills for income generation. These initiatives support women in overcoming climate shocks, enhancing their roles in economic and environmental sustainability, and fostering inclusive development.

Dr. Durr-e-Nayab presented findings on the valuation of non-market work in Pakistan, focusing on the integration of National Transfer Accounts (NTA) and National Time Transfer Accounts (NTTA). The study aimed to estimate unpaid work, highlight gender differences, and assign monetary value to tasks like care work and household production, which are not reflected in national economic accounts. Using data from the Pakistan Labour Force Survey (2018-19), the research revealed that while men contribute more to the market economy, women disproportionately bear the burden of unpaid work, affecting their educational attainment and market participation. The study concluded that recognizing and valuing women's contributions to non-market work is crucial for their economic empowerment and equal opportunities in Pakistan.

### **Key Takeaways**

- Despite higher educational attainment, women's labour market participation in Indonesia remains low due to wage discrimination, informal sector challenges, caregiving responsibilities, and a significant gender-gap compared to men.
- Women in rural and marginalized communities in Pakistan face substantial barriers, including limited access to resources, inadequate infrastructure, and resistance in patriarchal environments, compounded by a notable gap in digital literacy and restricted access to education and economic participation.
- Policy recommendations include promoting flexible working conditions, improving access to childcare and maternity leave, enhancing infrastructure and digital technology, and addressing child marriage to boost women's economic participation.
- Increasing women's involvement in the workforce, entrepreneurship, and leadership roles is crucial for economic growth, resilience, and innovation, with models like

Pathfinder International's focusing on eco-friendly practices and community mobilization.

- Recognizing and valuing women's non-market contributions, including unpaid care and household tasks, is essential for enhancing their economic empowerment and ensuring equal opportunities in the market economy, with policies needed to reduce the burden on women and promote greater equality in education and employment.

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### **Session 4 | Role of Policymakers in Expanding Roles of Women to Address Climate Change – Climate change related risks and uncertainties for women and Young Girls**

*Chair of Session: Hon. Valy Vetsaphong, MP Laos PDR*

#### **Speakers:**

- *Dr. Shaista Khan, Member of National Assembly, Pakistan*
- *Hon. Dr. AbdelHady El Kasbey, MP Egypt*
- *Mr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Institute of Pakistan*
- *Ms. Asia Naz Tanoli, Member of National Assembly, Pakistan*

#### **Session Overview**

Dr. Shaista Khan emphasized the importance of addressing the unique challenges faced by women and girls in the context of climate change. She highlighted Pakistan's commitment to developing gender-responsive climate policies that incorporate women's perspectives and enhance the capacity of policymakers. The approach focuses on integrating gender considerations into climate strategies to build resilience and promote equity. Dr. Khan expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Climate Change for their efforts in advancing gender-inclusive climate policies and called for continued collaboration to achieve a more resilient and equitable future.

Dr. AbdelHady El Kasbey highlighted the dual challenges of gender inequality and climate change, which hinder sustainable development. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change due to limited resource access, yet they play a vital role in climate adaptation efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues, increasing global inequalities and poverty. Egypt's COP27 Presidency presents an opportunity to emphasize gender equality and climate sensitivity. Rising energy and food costs, driven by climate change, are straining national budgets, and disproportionately impacting vulnerable women, particularly in Upper Egypt. Dr. Kasbey noted that enhanced female participation in environmental and disaster policies improves climate outcomes, yet investment in the gender-climate nexus remains minimal, with less than 1% of green bonds supporting women's empowerment.

Mr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri highlighted the significant challenges posed by gender inequality and climate change in Pakistan. He pointed out that while women constitute 67% of the agricultural workforce, they own only 1% of the land, illustrating a severe disparity. The lack of gender-segregated data on climate impacts and policy outcomes complicates the measurement and attribution of positive changes, emphasizing the need for comprehensive data to guide gender-responsive policies. Suleri stressed the importance of implementing gender-sensitive policies informed by accurate data. Enhancing gender-sensitive budgeting can improve the

effectiveness of infrastructure and disaster relief efforts, while prioritizing women's education can ensure broader societal benefits. He also noted that updating national adaptation and mitigation plans with a gender perspective could increase their effectiveness. Despite challenges such as societal norms and institutional barriers, these can be turned into opportunities through collaboration and commitment to removing obstacles.

Ms. Asia Naz Tanoli highlighted the urgent need for policies that support and empower women and children, particularly in the wake of disasters and climate change, which have been exacerbated by COVID-19. She stressed the importance of public-private partnerships in promoting women's economic independence and encouraged the sharing of successful policies to advance women's rights. Ms. Tanoli emphasized that integrating equality into all aspects of policy and ensuring access to financial resources are essential for effectively supporting women and addressing their specific challenges.

### **Key Takeaways**

- Gender inequality and climate change are intertwined challenges that disproportionately impact women and girls, exacerbated by limited access to resources and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Effective climate action requires gender-responsive policies and enhanced gender-sensitive budgeting, supported by accurate, gender-disaggregated data to improve infrastructure and disaster relief efforts.
- Increasing female participation in environmental and disaster policymaking leads to better climate outcomes and more inclusive, robust policies.
- Collaborative efforts between public and private sectors are essential to promote women's empowerment, financial independence, and gender equality, especially in the face of rising energy and food costs due to climate change.
- Prioritizing gender equality in national adaptation and mitigation plans, along with investments in women's education, can transform societal norms and institutional barriers, leading to broader societal benefits and greater female representation in various sectors.

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## **Session 5 | Investing in Health Care Systems Efficiently to Enable Climate Resilient Health Systems and Equitable Access to Healthcare**

*Chair of Session: Dr. Shaista Khan, Member of National Assembly, Pakistan*

### **Speakers:**

- *Mr. Zeeshan Salahuddin, Tabadlab*
- *Mr. Zaheer Akhtar Mehr, President OPGF*
- *Mr. Fayyaz Ahmed, Pathfinder International, Pakistan*

### **Session Overview**

Mr. Zeeshan Salahuddin's speech outlined the severe impact of climate change and COVID-19 on Pakistan, emphasizing how these crises exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, particularly for women and children. He highlighted the broader implications of climate-related disasters, such as floods and heatwaves, which not only cause immediate damage but also lead to long-term health issues, food insecurity, and economic strain. The challenges include overwhelmed healthcare systems, damaged infrastructure, and inadequate data collection and use. Mr.

Salahuddin stressed the need for strengthened provincial departments, improved climate health financing, and effective cross-sectoral coordination to address these issues. He also called for exploring climate debt swaps and conducting climate-induced financial costing to manage the financial and environmental impacts more effectively.

Mr. Zaheer Akhtar Mehr's emphasized the potential for Pakistan to enhance its healthcare system by drawing on lessons from recent changes in the U.S. healthcare system. He highlighted how innovative models in the U.S. have led to improved environmental quality and high-quality care, suggesting that Pakistan may adapt these successful practices to reduce costs and improve service quality. Mr. Mehr proposed exploring the U.S. insurance model's applicability to Pakistan and stressed the value of building partnerships and sharing knowledge between the two countries. This collaboration could help create a more robust global healthcare system and ensure access to quality care for all.

Mr. Fayyaz Ahmed highlighted that climate change, driven by human activities such as industrialization, poses an immediate and severe threat to our planet. Countries like Pakistan, which contribute minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions, are highly vulnerable, as evidenced by the catastrophic floods in 2022 that affected a third of the country, displaced millions, and severely damaged infrastructure. This disaster exacerbated poverty and led to significant economic losses. Mr. Ahmed emphasized the need for a paradigm shift in disaster response, advocating for local empowerment over top-down interventions. He drew inspiration from the Chinese concept of crisis that symbolizes, both, danger and opportunity. He called for redesigning infrastructure to withstand extreme weather, enhancing energy security, and fostering societal collaboration to build resilience and better prepare for future challenges.

### **Key Takeaways**

- Climate change and COVID-19 have intensified health risks for women and children, exacerbating issues like heat stress, waterborne diseases, and food insecurity, while also overwhelming healthcare systems and infrastructure.
- Pakistan's significant debt burden limits its capacity to invest in climate change mitigation and adaptation, further deepening vulnerabilities and hindering effective resource allocation due to inadequate data and integration of climate considerations in policies.
- Strengthening provincial departments, improving climate health financing, and updating national adaptation and mitigation plans are essential for managing climate and economic challenges, including exploring climate debt swaps.
- Lessons from the U.S. healthcare system, including environmental quality improvements and efficient care practices, could be valuable for enhancing Pakistan's healthcare, potentially reducing costs while maintaining high-quality services.
- Collaborative efforts between Pakistan and the U.S., as well as contributions from overseas Pakistanis, could lead to robust healthcare plans and improved healthcare access and quality in Pakistan.

## WAY FORWARD | ADOPTION OF ISLAMABAD DECLARATION

**Chairperson: Hon. Romina Khurshid Alam**, Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (To be assisted by Mirza Salman Baig)

**Dr. Usmonov Farrukh**, Interim Executive Director of AFPPD

The final session of the Regional Parliamentarians' Meeting on Gender Empowerment for a Green Economy culminated in the adoption of a Declaration by representatives from 20 countries. This declaration, formed through collaborative discussions among over 300 participants, reaffirms the commitment of parliamentarians to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The declaration emphasizes the urgent need to address the impacts of climate change, particularly on vulnerable populations such as women, girls, and adolescents. It highlights the importance of building resilient communities, promoting women's empowerment through education and employment, and ensuring data-driven policies that leave no one behind. The declaration also recognizes the crucial role of women and girls in disaster recovery and climate strategies, advocating for their inclusion in decision-making processes. Furthermore, it calls for the development of model legislation to protect the rights of women, girls, and adolescents, and urges collaboration among all stakeholders to implement the ICPD Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda.

### ***Adoption of the Islamabad Declaration***

A significant resolution agreed to be known as the "Islamabad Declaration" was put forth encapsulating 12 points of action. The Islamabad Declaration was unanimously approved by the AFPPD Standing Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The declaration represents a unified commitment by the participating nations to address the critical issues of gender inequality and climate change. It calls for a collaborative approach involving national parliaments, international organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders to implement policies that empower women and promote sustainable development. The final declaration, in its entirety, reflects the shared vision and dedication of the participating countries to create a more equitable and resilient future for all;

### **Statement of Commitment**

***In line with our role as parliamentarians, we:***

- I) Reaffirm our commitment to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as pathways to achieve an equitable future for all;
- II) Acknowledge the grave impacts of environment/climate change and global heating, particularly to promote policies and legislations that address the needs of vulnerable countries, which is a threat to health and human security everywhere;
- III) Commit to building resilient individuals, communities and societies, and investing in emergency preparedness, anticipatory actions, and targeted disaster risk reduction plans. This includes prioritizing the protection of women, girls and adolescents, migrants, minorities and refugees in all their diversity in all ages, and other groups in vulnerable and marginalized situations during emergencies, including those relating to climate change. We actively support women leadership in promoting peace, conflict prevention and in humanitarian action;

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IV) Recognize the importance of data and evidence collection, analysis, and dissemination, focusing on the needs of vulnerable groups, such as women, girls and adolescents, youth, persons with disabilities, migrants, and other groups with special protection needs, in line with the leave no one behind commitments;

V) Highlight the importance of promoting women's empowerment, including by increasing women's access to education, employment and services, addressing unpaid care work, and ensuring that policies address and redress gender inequalities. Showcase the work done by youth-led grassroots and civil society organizations;

VI) Work with national parliaments to address harmful social and gender norms that limit the potential of women, girls and adolescents in all their diversity, and other groups in vulnerable and marginalized situations, including through strengthened engagement of the mobilization of community activists, faith-based organizations, and traditional and religious leaders;

VII) Promote enabling environments that eliminate discrimination against women, girls and adolescents and empower them to make informed decisions about their lives and bodies and support for the initiatives that empower women and young people and promote gender equality as part of efforts to build human capital and foster inclusion as key elements of demographic resilience strategies;

VIII) Recognize the invaluable contributions of women, girls and adolescents to address the impact of climate change, and the need to leverage their experiences in disaster recovery and climate strategies keeping in mind that young people, in particular girls, are vulnerable to being disproportionately affected by climate change;

IX) Reaffirm that we parliamentarians and policymakers must pay careful attention to the needs and rights of all people, including women, girls and adolescents, and young people everywhere, especially in disaster zones;

X) Take affirmative action to develop a model or common legislation that places solidarity with the women, girls and adolescents at the center with respect to their rights;

XI) Collaborate on developing policies and strategies to address climate change, leveraging the contributions of women, girls and adolescents in resilience-building efforts.

XII) Recommit to working with all stakeholders, including development partners: civil societies; local, national, and regional governments; the private sectors; multilateral organizations; national parliamentary bodies and regional and global fora on population and development; to implement the ICPD Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda;

The session concluded with expressions of gratitude towards Pakistan for its hospitality and efforts in making the conference a success



## CLOSING SESSION

### **Keynote: Hon. Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan, Speaker of the Punjab Assembly (Pakistan)**

Mr. Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan, Speaker of the Punjab Assembly (Pakistan), emphasized the urgent need for a green economy to ensure sustainable development without depleting natural resources. He highlighted Pakistan's severe vulnerability to climate change, despite contributing minimally to global emissions, with recent floods causing devastating human and economic losses. His Excellency, Mr. Khan, underscored the critical role women must play in climate action, advocating for their increased representation in policymaking, particularly in Punjab, where their leadership is vital for addressing the intersectional challenges they face. He called for international collaboration and equitable climate strategies, emphasizing the need for gender-responsive governance and policies that address the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and the poor. He concluded by expressing gratitude to the delegates, particularly Her Excellency Toshiko Abe and Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam, and anticipated positive outcomes from the conference.



### **Vote of Thanks: Hon. Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination**

In her closing speech, Hon. Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, expressed deep gratitude to all participants of the conference, particularly the parliamentarians from AFPPD member states, for their active engagement in advancing gender-empowered green economies. She congratulated everyone involved in finalizing the Islamabad Declaration, highlighting it as a testament to their commitment to inclusivity and climate justice. Ms. Alam also acknowledged the AFPPD Secretariat, especially Farukh Usmanov, for their exemplary organization of the event. She emphasized the importance of building on the progress achieved at the upcoming Baku COP of the UNFCCC and recognized the diverse experiences of member countries as a strength in addressing climate challenges. She extended special thanks to Mr. Malik Ahmad Khan,

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Speaker of the Punjab Assembly, and partners including Pathfinder International and UNFPA for their invaluable support. Looking ahead, Ms. Alam encouraged participants to make the most of the study visit to Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority and concluded by celebrating the collective achievements of the conference, expressing confidence in the continued collaboration for meaningful and lasting results.

### STUDY VISIT

During their study visit to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the delegates were introduced to Pakistan's premier agency responsible for overseeing disaster management activities at the federal level. As the executive arm of the National Disaster Management Commission (NDMC), chaired by the Prime Minister, NDMA plays a critical role in coordinating disaster management efforts across various government ministries, departments, armed forces, international and national NGOs, and UN agencies, ensuring a unified and effective response to disasters.

NDMA's mission is to build sustainable operational capacity and professional competence in disaster risk management (DRM) at the national level. Key objectives include mapping hazards, conducting regular risk analyses, and developing guidelines for national and provincial stakeholders. The NDMA also focuses on establishing Disaster Management Authorities and Emergency Operations Centres in hazard-prone areas, providing technical assistance to federal and provincial authorities, and organizing training and awareness programs to enhance the capacity of stakeholders.

Moreover, NDMA is responsible for coordinating the federal government's emergency response through the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) during national disasters. It also ensures that disaster response teams meet international standards and works closely with the media to foster greater participation in DRM activities. The visit provided the delegates with valuable insights into the NDMA's comprehensive approach to disaster management, highlighting its pivotal role in safeguarding communities across Pakistan.



**PRESS RELEASE**

**Chairman Senate, H.E. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani Addressing the Delegates of Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) at Parliament House**

Tuesday, 13 August 2024



**Islamabad** - Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has said that empowering women to take leadership roles in climate action will lead to more innovative and comprehensive solutions, driving progress in environmental

and sustainability. Chairman Senate expressed these views at a reception hosted in honour of the delegation of Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) at the Parliament House on Tuesday. The delegation was led by Secretary General of AFPPD Hon. Dr. Jeth Sirathranout.

Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has said that impacts of rising temperatures, erratic weather patterns, and natural disasters disproportionately affect women and marginalized communities and it is imperative that response to these challenges is inclusive, equitable, and transformative.

He felicitated Hon. Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, the Ministry, Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, and all the stakeholders for organizing such a significant and impactful conference on an issue that resonates deeply with our national and regional priorities.

The diverse gathering of parliamentarians from Cambodia, Egypt, Japan, Jordan, Indonesia, Iraq, Lao PDR, the Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Thailand, Vietnam, and Turkmenistan is a testament to our shared commitment to addressing the critical issues of climate change, green economy, gender equality and sustainable development. He also admired the dedication to integrating gender perspectives into environmental and economic policies, which would help build a sustainable and inclusive future for our peoples. "Pakistan, like many of our neighbouring countries, faces significant vulnerabilities to climate change" Chairman Senate remarked.

The Chairman Senate observed that empowering women is not only a matter of social justice but also a strategic imperative for achieving economic growth and environmental sustainability. He said that women, who make up nearly half of our population, have always been key players in managing natural resources and advocating for sustainable practices. Inclusivity is the cornerstone of a successful green economy, he remarked. He said that transition to a green economy is inevitable and prudent to reduce environmental risks and empowering women within this framework is of paramount importance.

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Quoting the former Prime Minister of Pakistan Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, "A society where women are marginalized is a society that cannot reach its full potential", Chairman Senate said that her words continue to guide my vision for Pakistan. He said that women bring unique perspectives and solutions to national challenges and their representation in decision-making processes is vital.

He specifically acknowledged the role of Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah, Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, Justice Ayesha Malik, and late Asma Jahangir for their contribution in the fields of democracy, women's rights, social justice, and equality. Chairman Senate also mentioned the active role played by Hina Rabbani Khar in the area of foreign policy. He added that seven Senate standing committees are being chaired by women, which vindicates our commitment to women empowerment. He called for engaging local communities, particularly women, in climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. He also highlighted some key areas seeking attention for collective efforts. Chairman Senate stated that in order to mainstream the role of women in agriculture, water management, and energy conservation, we must provide equal access to education and training in green economy sectors such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, and environmental management. He also proposed educational programs and vocational trainings to equip women with skills needed to thrive in a green economy. He said that financial empowerment is a critical aspect of achieving true gender equality and facilitating women's access to credit, investment in women-led green enterprises can drive both innovation and economic growth.

The Chairman Senate underscored that as parliamentarians, we have a pivotal role to play in enacting and enforcing laws that promote gender equality and environmental sustainability. He observed that concerted efforts are needed involving all stakeholders, including government, civil society, and the private sector to promote a gender inclusive transition to a green economy. "Together, we can make a difference to pave the way for a greener, more equitable and sustainable future for generations to come" he remarked while concluding his speech. Leader of the Opposition in the Senate Syed Shibli Faraz, Senator Iraf ul Haq Siddiqui, Senator Saleem Mandviwala, Senator Haji Hidayatullah, Senator Shahadat Awan, Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar MNA, Senator Abdul Qadir and others were also present.



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