

Press Release: Post High Level Political Forum (HLPF) National Conference on Voluntary National Review (VNR) of Sustainable Development Goals held at Islamabad on Thursday dated July 25, 2019

We, the representatives of civil society from across Pakistan, gathered here at Islamabad for a post HLPF national conference on VNR and SDGs, congratulate the Government of Pakistan, for presenting VNR report during the High Level Political Forum held under the aegis of United Nation's between July 9-18, 2019. We also acknowledge the space provided by the Planning Commission of Pakistan to Pakistan Development Alliance member organizations / CSOs for conducting stakeholders' consultations on VNR processes in 42 districts across the country.

While we acknowledge the Government's efforts in setting up institutional structures for the implementation of the SDGs, we also note widening inequalities in the country, led by trade liberalisation policies, unequal resource and land distribution, unregulated corporate action, and public resource capture by private entities that continue to leave many behind. We are disappointed to note that the official VNR report discusses only three of the six HLPF review themes and excludes Goals 4, 10 and 16, which are pivotal to the 2030 Agenda. Recent trends also indicate an economic downturn; high levels of inflation; rising food and water insecurity; loss of livelihoods; rising debts, evaporating resources for public goods and services (particularly for sexual and reproductive health, and life skills based education, girls right to quality secondary education); shrinking civic spaces and freedom of expression; pervasive gender based violence and discrimination; lack of access to justice and lack of effective access to information.

The Post HLPF National Conference was attended by Parliamentarians, representatives from SDGs Unit Planning Commission of Pakistan, CSOs, media, academia, economists, People Living with Disabilities (PWDs), child protection institutions, young people organizations, religious minorities, transgender communities and private sector. The conference was organized jointly by Pakistan Development Alliance, Parliamentary Commission for Human Rights, National Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs with the support of Action for Sustainable Development (A4SD) and Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP).

Talking to the participants Ms. Ghazala Saifi , member National Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs, shared that we will have quarterly review of SDGs as we think it requires strict review by the Parliamentarians. This may be shocking for you to know that even Parliamentary Task Force members were not shared the official VNR report. Ms. Nafeesa Khattack, another member of National Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs said that we would like to focus on SDGs 4 (education) and we will focus on girls right to quality secondary education. There is a dire need to build the capacity of Parliamentarians to understand SDGs and VNR processes.

Mr. Muhammad Shafique, Executive Director Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights said that Parliamentarians have critical role to play in order to oversight the implementation of SDGs in Pakistan. AwazCDS/ Pakistan Development Alliance, Parliamentary Commission for Human Rights and National Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs have signed an MOU for engaging CSOs and Parliamentarians together for the implementation of SDGs.

Mr. Shakeel Ahmed from UNDP emphasized upon the need of a collective platform of the related stakeholders for the realization of SDGs in Pakistan.

Mr. Ali Kemal from SDGs Unit Planning Commission of Pakistan said that we did engaged with CSOs for the preparation of VNR however we appreciate Pakistan Development Alliance has pivotal role in accessing to the district level stakeholders during this whole process. He further said that we have a major challenge of data availability against several of Pakistan's national priority indicators.

Mr. Zia ur Rehman, Chief Executive AwazCDS-Pakistan and National Convener, Pakistan Development Alliance said that government need to revisit the national priority indicators considering the emerging needs of the nation. He further stressed for creation of Pakistan SDGs Support Fund for localization of SDGs. He demanded that local governments should be empowered and facilitated for the appropriate realization of SDGs in Pakistan.

Mr. Hashim Bilal, Country Director VSO Pakistan, Ms. Munazza Gillani Country Director Sightsavers, Mr. Khalid Naeem Executive Director, SEDA also spoke at the occasion.
