

Pakistan Position Paper - UNESCAP

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The Role of Infrastructure in the Development of South East Asia

Infrastructure is a key component in the development of any economy. When that economy is among the fastest growing in the world with a GDP growth rate of 4.24%, however, and contains a significant portion of the global population, it becomes even more essential. As such, it is essential that southeastern Asia foster interconnectedness through infrastructure and that they incorporate the entire world in the creation of a borderless economy. Pakistan is in a unique position in that it is located at the extremities of the middle-east and Asia, and is currently in the midst of the turmoil in the middle east, it understands the importance of this issue. A stronger infrastructure based Asian economy could benefit the entire region, as well as providing a framework for similar efforts in the middle east.

One of the largest obstacles with regards to infrastructure in Pakistan is climate change. Due to higher global temperatures, the Indus river, Pakistan's primary source of fresh water, has experienced greater rates of flooding over the past decade because of glacier melt, with annual fatal floods. This has caused many buildings and roads to be destroyed and decreases the possibility of international investment in Pakistani infrastructure. Taking this into consideration, it can be surmised that any possible solutions would have to go hand in hand with environmental sustainability. This is a

massive issue, and the delegation of Pakistan hopes that our international partners will support us in tackling this critical problem.

Recently, Pakistan has made several attempts at cooperation with other Asian countries on the infrastructure front, most notably with China, which recently invested 46 billion dollars in Pakistani infrastructure. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is expected to connect northern regions of China with the Pakistani city of Gwadar through motorways, railroads and an oil pipeline, as well as investing in energy sources and creating over 700, 000 jobs. The delegation of Pakistan believes that this is a huge step forward for our country, and we hope to be able to drastically improve the Pakistani economy as well as to provide employment and a brighter future for many of our citizens.

Better infrastructure in many areas would benefit the entire country, but at present, the two most crucial areas are education and food production. The construction of more schools would contribute to the elevation of Pakistan's literacy rate, which currently sits at 57.9%, as well as providing jobs in both the short and long term as construction workers and teachers. Meanwhile, in the agricultural sector, improved infrastructure would produce better harvests, create construction jobs, and help to provide agricultural education for Pakistani farmers.

The Future of Food

Food is one of the most basic of human needs, second only to air and water. Because of this, it has universally been acknowledged as a fundamental human right. In spite of this, a large portion of the world's population still suffers from substantial food insecurity. Although many of the regions with the worst food security are among the world's largest producers of food, they are often some of the most malnourished. Pakistan is, unfortunately, one of these countries, with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimating that roughly 24% to 37.5% of Pakistanis are undernourished, including widespread iodine, iron, and protein deficiencies. Malnourishment in Pakistan has become so severe that the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN)'s fifth report estimated that these deficiencies cost Pakistan a 3-4% GDP loss every year. This is, clearly, a crucial issue in our country, and one that needs to be addressed on a global scale in order to achieve best results.

A major issue regarding the security of food production in Pakistan is climate change. A rise in global temperatures has led to an alteration of growing patterns in many regions of our country, as well as migration of many species of domesticated meat animals. It has also caused the melting of the glaciers that feed our primary source of water, the Indus river. Whereas in the short term this has produced massive flooding during the monsoon season, it is expected that water flow will decrease rapidly over the next few decades, leading to widespread famine and drought. Another effect of climate change upon Pakistani agriculture is an increase in extreme weather events, which

decreases food security and economic stability for farmers. All in all, sustainable agriculture will play a major role in the improvement and development of Pakistani food sources in the near future.

Other concerns which contribute to a lack of food security are rising population, shrinking agricultural land, competition for water access, and lack of sufficient infrastructure. In particular, a rapid rate of population growth prevents domestic agriculture from providing adequate food resources, causing inflation of prices and competition for food. The government of Pakistan has received aid from NGOs in the past which has helped to grow the agricultural sector, but without a reduction in birth rate, this will never be enough. We hope that through better education of women and a higher contraceptive prevalence rate, we can bring down this number and provide a better quality of life for our citizens.

Economically, the agricultural sector is one of Pakistan's primary industries, making up 25% of the national GDP and employing over 44% of the country's labour force. If we could incentivise innovations in environmentally friendly agriculture on a national level with the help of the United Nations and NGOs, the delegation of Pakistan hopes that employment rates would rise and GDP would increase. Such actions would strengthen the economy of our country, potentially creating growth and prosperity akin to that of south eastern Asia. With more inflated levels of growth, it is hoped that Pakistan could become party to more international trade agreements, further benefitting our economy, as well as those of our trade partners.

Labour Migration and Illegal Trafficking in the Asia-Pacific

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), in 2012, over 20.9 million people were trapped in forced labour, over half of whom originated in the Asia-Pacific region. This is only one of the alarming statistics which evidences the need for international cooperation on the subject of labour trafficking and migration. Both of these phenomenon are most prolific in less developed regions such as the middle east, and Pakistan has one of the highest labour export ratios in the world.

Pakistan is primarily a labour-exporting country, due in part to the fact that it has a large population and few jobs, a weak public education system and poor working conditions. Because of the lack of education, many citizens are denied high paying jobs, and there is intense competition for the few that are available to the general public. Due to this, Pakistan has an unemployment rate of 6.4%, with a large proportion of labourers being underemployed. In addition, the “working conditions... [of] females are often hazardous; having long working hours, no medical benefits, no job security, subjected to job discrimination, verbal abuse and sexual harassment and no support from male oriented labor unions”(An In-Depth Analysis of Women's Labor Force Participation in Pakistan), which causes women to be more willing to migrate in search of better jobs.

One of the reasons why Pakistan has so many labour emigrants is because of the shockingly low rate of female employment in our country. Due to the nature of Pakistan`s economy, many women are employed informally, as farmers or managers of

households in rural areas. As such, it is difficult to say with much accuracy what percentage of women are employed, although estimates range from 50-80%, depending on how informal agricultural work is measured. Although current female workforce participation falls at around twenty percent, there is an annual increase of approximately 6.5%. Pakistan's low female literacy rate often serves as a barrier for women entering the workforce, leading to lower income jobs and higher incentive for migration to countries where education is provided and jobs are more available.

Human trafficking is also a pervasive issue, with millions of people trafficked out of the country every year to be used as labourers, suicide bombers and sex slaves. Although we still have a long way to go, the government of Pakistan is pleased to report that we are making progress. Legislation is pending that would close loopholes and bridge gaps in existing laws pertaining to human trafficking, and as of 2014 a national action plan has been drafted which aims to work in tandem with the Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance (PACHTO) of 2002 and the Pakistan National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking of 2009 to eliminate human trafficking and slavery by the mid 21st century.