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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **International conference launched for increasing water, food and energy security for poverty alleviation in dryland regions of Pakistan and Asia and the Pacific Region**

**Islamabad / Rawalpindi:** UNESCO and Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi (PMAS-AAUR), jointly launched today a three day International Conference on **Asia Pacific Policy Dialogue on Water, Energy and Food Security for Poverty Alleviation in Dryland Regions** at PMAS-Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi.

This International Conference is held at a time when the United Nations together with its partners is promoting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Thus representing a significant step forward in the recognition of the contribution of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) to sustainable development. As such, UNESCO is highlighting key issues, available solutions and policy directions for poverty alleviation and improved livelihood by inviting policy makers, scientists, academicians and other stakeholders to explore new ways for increasing water and food security and alleviate poverty in the resource deficient dryland regions worldwide, in Asia and the Pacific region, and particularly in Pakistan. The Conference will constitute to integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national development plans and will be proposing policy guidelines and strategies for effective use of resources to ensure water, energy and food security.

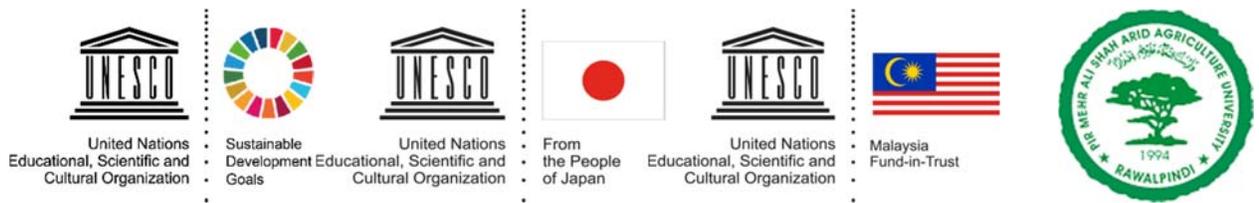
In his welcome address, Prof. Dr. Rai Niaz Ahmad, Vice Chancellor of PMAS-AAUR said that by joining hands together and through collective efforts, we will be able to overcome the negative impact of climate change.

Ms. Vibeke Jensen, UNESCO Representative to Pakistan in her inaugural remarks stressed that the rates of soil depletion are especially worrying in the drylands which need significant attention for global sustainability, especially food security. Drylands make up 44 percent of all the world's cultivated systems and account for 50 percent of its livestock. She emphasized on reviewing existing policies and interventions and make the needed revisions to achieve the 2030 goals. "The growing demand for food, energy and water will claim more land thus leading to more deforestation and environmental degradation unless we commit to restoring degraded land", Ms. Vibeke said. She also stressed on the need for partnerships between governments and private sector to provide an enabling environment for smallholder farmers to increase productivity in a sustainable manner.

In his key note remarks, H.E. Mr. Takashi KURAI, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan mentioned that the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development is a wider plan of action and guiding principles for all which requires joint efforts and the Government of Japan efforts is committed to address poverty and working to improve health, education, disaster management, hunger and climate change. Furthermore, the Government of Japan is assisting Pakistan in many areas including the provision of safe and clean drinking water, livestock, disaster and technology use in many rural areas.

While H.E Dato' Dr. Hasrul Sani Mujtabar, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan in his remarks congratulated UNESCO and PMAS-Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi and expressed that all the main themes - Water, Energy and Food Security are important for human security. He expressed that the Government of Malaysia under the South-South Cooperation will continue to share information and learn good experiences from the member countries.

Chief Guest, Mr. Sheikh Aftab Ahmad, Federal Minister for Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, thanked UNESCO and PMAS-AAUR for organizing the conference and termed the International Conference as an excellent example of promoting cooperation among member states and hoped that the conference participants would come with key recommendations to policy makers that will be helpful for Pakistan to devise strategies for addressing food, water and energy security issues. He said that Pakistan has been confronting the energy and water crises and that the government of Pakistan is realizing these and other



resources for greater economic development. Diامر-Bhasha dam project is one of many examples that the government is working on.

Dr. Shahbaz Khan, Director, UNESCO Regional Science Bureau for Asia and the Pacific highlighted the importance of the Conference and also informed about the various programmes that UNESCO is undertaking through different funds in trust programmes including from Japan and Malaysia under which Engineering Qualification Standardization, International Hydrological Programme, Man and the Biosphere Programme and use of ICT for High Learning in Asia Pacific are being carried out.

The three day International Conference is being organized around four major themes in Water Security for Sustainable Development, Renewable Energy Systems, Food Security and Poverty Alleviation.

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