

Call to preserve forests water, energy reservoirs



UNESCO, Arid varsity discuss ways to save environment

Islamabad—United Nations Education & Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University (PMAS-AAUR) Wednesday jointly launched 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 varsity. The International Conference is being held at a time when the United Nations together with its partners is promoting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The conference is seen as a significant step in 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 take up the issues like 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. 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 per cent of all the world's cultivated systems and account for 50 per cent 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 Takashi KURAI, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan said 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.

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