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Water, energy, and food policy conference held by UNESCO and Arid Agriculture University

Federal Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Sheikh Aftab Ahmad said that Pakistan has been confronting energy and water crises and the conference would help Pakistan devise strategies for addressing food, water and energy security issues.

He expressed these views while speaking as a chief guest at the three-day international conference jointly launched by UNESCO and Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi (PMAS-AAUR) on Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on Water, Energy and Food Security for Poverty Alleviation in Dryland Regions at PMAS-Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi.

The conference is being organised around four major themes: water security for sustainable development, renewable energy systems, food security, and poverty alleviation.

Sheikh Aftab termed the conference an excellent example of promoting cooperation among member states and hoped that the conference participants would come up with key recommendations for policy makers that will help Pakistan to devise strategies for addressing food, water and energy security issues.

This conference is held at a time when the United Nations together with its partners is promoting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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 help in integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national development plans.

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 stressed that the rates of soil depletion are especially worrying in the drylands which need significant attention for global sustainability and food security. Drylands make up 44 percent of all the world's cultivated systems and account

for 50 percent of its livestock. She emphasised on reviewing existing policies and interventions and making 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.

Takashi Kurai, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan mentioned that the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development is a wider plan of action and a guiding principle for all which requires joint efforts and that the Government of Japan’s efforts is committed to addressing 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.

The High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan Dr Hasrul Sani Mujtabar said that the government of Malaysia will continue to share information and learn from the experiences of the member states.

UNESCO Regional Science Bureau for Asia and the Pacific Director Dr. Shahbaz Khan highlighted 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.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/11/23/city/water-energy-and-food-policy-conference-held-by-unesco-and-arid-agriculture-university/>
