Capacity Analytics

IQRA UNIVERSITY IU
H-9 CAMPUS, ISLAMABAD

SOCIAL SCIENCES CONFERENCE 2025

PANEL DISCUSSION

on

CLIMATE CHANGE & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
A TRANSITION TO GREEN ECONOMY

Panelists

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Panel Moderator

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Discussion Summary

Question by Moderator Dr. Mutee ul Rehman

Climate justice is a growing concern, especially for vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by climate change. What steps should governments, financial institutions, development partners, and civil society take to ensure a just and equitable transition to a green economy? How can civil society bridge the gap between policy-making and real-world action to ensure effective climate adaptation and mitigation?

Response by Ms. Aisha Khan

Ms. Aisha Khan emphasized that equitable and inclusive measures are critical for bridging the gap between policy-making and real-world climate action. She highlighted that Pakistan has actively lobbied for climate justice at various international climate conferences, leading to the establishment of the disaster damage fund. However, she noted that climate justice must not only be considered in the context of the Global South versus the Global North but also within civil society itself, ensuring fairness and equity at the national level.

A major challenge is the disconnect between policymakers and grassroots communities. Since policies are often designed through a top-down approach, they may fail to align with the needs, aspirations, and socio-cultural dimensions of local populations. To address this, a multi-stakeholder platform is

essential, bringing together civil society, government, financial institutions, and development partners to ensure climate justice is effectively managed within Pakistan.

The government has introduced various policies targeting sectors most vulnerable to climate change, but gaps persist between policy formulation and implementation. Ms. Khan identified the absence of collective ownership and shared responsibility as a key barrier. She advocated for an open government partnership model, wherein policies are domestically formulated and implementation is closely monitored by relevant authorities.

Financial institutions also play a pivotal role in this transition. Climate financing strategies must be designed to effectively reach marginalized and vulnerable communities. Key considerations include identifying target groups, assessing risk, and shaping financing policies to be accessible, affordable, and scalable. While discussions at the macro level focus on overarching policies, implementation at the micro level requires clearly defined responsibilities, assessment mechanisms, and monitoring frameworks.

Key takeaways from Ms. Khan's response included the need for transparency, inclusivity, and accountability in decision-making. She stressed that civil society organizations act as a bridge between communities and policymakers, offering low-cost, locally relevant solutions. However, international donors and organizations often impose stringent funding conditions that overlook local socio-cultural dynamics. Therefore, capacity-building efforts should be prioritized, and country-specific policies should be developed to align with national and regional needs. Additionally, within Pakistan, it is crucial to consider the diverse regional dynamics of each province, ensuring that solutions are tailored to local contexts through active engagement with civil society.

Question by Moderator Dr. Mutee ul Rehman

How is the Asian Development Bank supporting developing economies in general and Pakistan in particular in their transition to a green economy?

Response by Mr. Asif Turangzai

Mr. Asif Turangzai highlighted the need to consider ecological realities beyond political boundaries, emphasizing that natural disasters and environmental changes transcend national borders. He noted that Pakistan, as one of the 69 developing member countries of the ADB, is actively aligning its strategies with climate action. One of the key frameworks guiding this transition is the ADB's "Strategy 2030," which prioritizes sustainable development, with nearly 50-60% of its key initiatives focused on green economic growth.

He further elaborated on ADB's recent commitments, including the "Climate Change Action Plan" for the Central and East Asia region and the "Country Climate Change Action Plan" developed in collaboration with the Government of Pakistan. This plan outlines ADB's investment strategy over the next five to six years, ensuring targeted climate resilience efforts.

A significant development is the formulation of a country partnership strategy for 2025-2030, which serves as a guiding framework for financial allocation across key sectors. Mr. Turangzai also mentioned a major announcement by the newly appointed ADB president, committing $100 billion toward climate change initiatives by 2030 across all member countries.

With Pakistan's diverse geography, spanning from glaciers to coastal regions, ADB is focusing on pragmatic solutions, including a glacier conservation project involving an investment of $3.5 billion across nine countries, with $250 million co-funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Additionally, Pakistan is actively engaging in regional projects and partnerships to secure further climate adaptation initiatives.

In conclusion, Mr. Turangzai stressed the importance of adopting a regional perspective, ensuring localized solutions, and fostering collaborative efforts to enhance climate resilience. He emphasized that Pakistan must integrate global strategies with tailored national policies to effectively transition towards a greener economy.

Question by Moderator Dr. Mutee ul Rehman

Sir, you have been associated with academia and socio-economic policy and research for more than four decades. What steps should academia take to develop more accurate and comprehensive metrics for measuring the transition and impact of the green economy, and how can these measurements better inform policy and decision-making?

Response by Dr. Eatzaz Ahmed

Dr. Eatzaz emphasized the importance of both stock and flow variables in understanding the methodologies to measure climate change and its economic implications. Stock variables, such as temperature at a specific point in time, and flow variables, such as rainfall over a period, are both crucial for an accurate analysis. He explained that to effectively measure the impact of the green economy, academia must develop dynamic input-output models that allow for real-time analysis of environmental and economic factors. While simple econometric models can also be useful, he stressed the importance of utilizing data intelligently and ensuring long-term data collection, as climate change is a gradual process.

Dr. Eatzaz highlighted the need for extensive datasets to track long-term changes, given that even a one-degree temperature increase over a year is significant. He also noted that climate change effects vary geographically, making it essential to differentiate between regional climate differences. For instance, the climate dynamics of Lahore are distinct from those of Gilgit, necessitating specialized modelling approaches. To address these challenges, structural models such as the Structural Equation Model (SEM) can be employed to incorporate regional variations and their economic implications.

In conclusion, he stressed that selecting the right models, combined with the intelligent use of relevant data, will be instrumental in accurately measuring the transition and impact of the green economy, ultimately informing better policy decisions.

Question by Moderator Dr. Mutee ul Rehman

When we talk about green economy, agriculture sector is a key pillar because it directly impacts environmental sustainability, food security, and green employment. Additionally, climate-smart agriculture and green jobs seems to be the future development agenda. With global warming affecting food security, how can grassroots initiatives and movements help communities adopt climate-resilient agricultural practices and advocate for sustainable food systems?

Response by Ms. Aisha Khan

Ms. Khan emphasized that water is the foundation of climate change and agriculture, playing a crucial role in food security. She pointed out that Pakistan is becoming increasingly food insecure, not only due to climate change but also because of unsustainable agricultural practices that do not align with land requirements. She stressed the need for a more physiologically suitable agricultural system and a shift toward green agriculture and sustainable food practices.

She highlighted the overconsumption of water in agriculture and the importance of training and capacity building at the farm level. Research institutions need to develop climate-resilient crops that require less water, and these innovations must reach farmers. She expressed concern over the shrinking size of farms, with 81% being less than five hectares, making small farmers particularly vulnerable to climate shocks.

Ms. Khan also discussed the alarming trend of agricultural land being converted into real estate, which threatens food security. She emphasized the need to introduce climate-smart technology, citing the Global Change Impact Studies Centre (GCISC) under the Ministry of Climate Change as a valuable research body. However, she noted that research findings must be effectively disseminated to farmers through extension services and civil society initiatives.

She further explained that different regions require tailored approaches; for instance, mountain communities rely on terrace farming and need efficient water management strategies. The dominance of a few water-intensive crops, which consume 80% of the country's water while contributing only 5% to GDP, must be reconsidered. She highlighted the inefficiencies in water usage, noting that 90% of the Indus River's flow is allocated to agriculture, yet 60% of this water is lost in transmission.

Additionally, she pointed out the challenge of rapid population growth, which exacerbates food insecurity. While agricultural productivity has increased significantly since the 1950s, the rising population has outpaced food production. With more than 50% of the Indus River's water coming

from glacial melt, changes in glacier flow due to climate change could have severe consequences for agriculture. She concluded that academia and universities must develop solutions to increase agricultural yields while reducing water consumption, ensuring long-term food security and sustainability.

Question by Moderator Dr. Mutee ul Rehman

With climate financing becoming a global priority, how can financial institutions ensure that funds are directed towards genuinely sustainable initiatives rather than green-washing?

Response by Mr. Asif Turangzai

Mr. Turangzai acknowledged that greenwashing is a growing concern, with many projects being labelled as climate initiatives without substantial impact. However, he emphasized that real, tangible progress is being made through genuine climate finance initiatives. He cited examples such as the Balochistan Water Resource Project, a $1 billion initiative supported by ADB that has significantly improved agricultural productivity through modern farming techniques. Similarly, the Flood Reconstruction and Resilience Project in AJK incorporates bioengineering techniques for slope stabilization, enhancing both infrastructure and environmental sustainability.

He also highlighted the Karachi BRT project, co-financed by the Green Climate Fund, which integrates a biogas plant to fuel buses using organic waste. Other initiatives include the Balakot hydropower project, the solarisation of thousands of Basic Health Units (BHUs) and schools, and small-scale hydropower projects aimed at expanding access to clean energy. Mr. Turangzai emphasized that ADB has aligned 100% of its portfolio with climate change goals, ensuring that no projects contribute negatively to the environment. He reaffirmed that climate finance must prioritize accountability, impact assessment, and stringent evaluation to prevent greenwashing and maximize sustainable development outcomes.

Question by Moderator Dr. Mutee ul Rehman

How can academia collaborate with industries, governments, and civil society to bridge the gap between research and real-world implementation of green policies?

Response by Dr. Eatzaz Ahmed

Dr. Eatzaz discussed the role of academia in developing economic models that better integrate environmental considerations. He elaborated on the importance of the Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) model, which uses input-output tables to analyse the relationships between industries while incorporating environmental externalities. He emphasized that traditional models often overlook environmental damages, leading to inaccurate assessments of development and climate change interdependencies.

He pointed out that while academia can develop models based on time-series data, short-term fluctuations in environmental variables like temperature are minimal, requiring broader datasets for meaningful insights. He suggested that academia should focus on providing incentives that resonate with policymakers and the public. For example, while minor pollution taxes may not affect behaviour significantly, direct fuel price hikes often provoke immediate responses. Strategic policy recommendations, rooted in behavioural economics, can help align environmental goals with economic incentives. By fostering collaborations between researchers, policymakers, and industries, academia can facilitate the practical implementation of green policies, ensuring that research translates into actionable, impactful strategies.