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Press Release

Discussion highlights opportunities for women's economic empowerment in Pakistan

Australian High Commissioner Margaret Adamson together with UN Women today hosted a panel discussion on opportunities for the economic empowerment of Pakistani women.

The discussion brought together a number of influential Pakistanis from government, civil society and media to discuss opportunities to accelerate women's economic empowerment, including through the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The panel included keynote speaker Dr. Zahir Shah, Project Director and CPEC coordinator Ministry Planning Development and Reform; Naeem-uz-Zafar, Member Social Sector Ministry Planning Development and Reform; Syed M. Nawab, UNDP Women's Economic Empowerment Advisor; Guntur Sugiyartu, ADB Principal Economist; and Dr. Fouzia Saeed, Director Lok Virsa.

High Commissioner Adamson said Pakistan had immense potential waiting to be unlocked in the form of its talented women.

"The lives of Pakistani women are changing rapidly. It will be vital for a prosperous Pakistan to facilitate an environment which provides enough economic opportunities to engage women. I encourage the development of policies which seek to maximise the participation of women throughout Pakistan's economy," Ms Adamson said.

"The Australian Government is actively exploring avenues for increased skills development and opportunities for women's entrepreneurship in Pakistan, particularly in education, agribusiness and the broader agriculture sector," she said.

Sangeeta Thapa, Deputy Country Representative, UN Women said: "CPEC presents a huge economic opportunity to improve gender parity and accelerate Pakistan's economic growth. To capitalise on this opportunity, structural barriers within Pakistan that limit women's economic potential will need to be addressed."

Dr Fouzia Saeed, Director Lok Virsa said: "Any economic development initiative has an empowering impact on women. Their access in terms of mobility, opportunities for progress, livelihoods and taking charge of their lives increases."

The discussion was part of a series held by the Inter Agency Gender and Development Group (INGAD) of donors and multilateral agencies working to promote gender equality and interagency coordination in Pakistan since 1985. Australia and UN Women are co-chairs.

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