



ROUNDTABLE ON WATER CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND NATIONAL SECURITY

27 JANUARY, 2019



INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Peace, Security and Developmental Studies (CPSD) hosted a roundtable on ‘Water Crisis Management and National Security’ on 27th January 2019. Experts discussed the issues of water management mechanism, education and human resource development. The panel consisted of experts from civil society, academia, entrepreneurs and members of the business community. The panelists had consensus that water crisis management is vital for sustainable economic growth and national security. Therefore the issues pertaining to this domain need immediate and effective resolution for the national prosperity.

AGENDA OF THE ROUNDTABLE

The roundtable was aimed to analyse the mitigation and intervention strategies for water crisis and management of water resources for the sustainable development at national level. Given the increasing urbanization, a dearth of resources and a rapidly changing climate, round table attempted to highlight the national and regional water issues. It also tried to invigorate critical thinking for addressing the issue of water management vis-à-vis national economic sustainability and security.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SESSION

Ms. Simi Kamal, Water and Development Expert highlighted that Pakistan is ranked third in the list of countries going through issues of water scarcity, which will have implications for the national security. She further highlighted that issues of water scarcity and contamination, not only adversely impacts the public health but also over shadows economic development. Pakistan’s water crisis issue is currently at a critical stage and needs immediate attention. She quoted that findings of joint research initiative of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), suggest that the country is expected to “run dry” by 2025. As Pakistan’s economy is largely agricultural and it has the world’s highest water intensive rates, the problem of water crisis is expected to bring a national security threat to the country. She proposed that politicians and relevant institution need to work jointly for averting the challenges of water security.

Dr. Muhammad Bashir Lakhani, Head of Water Division, Techno Consults said Karachi - economic hub of Pakistan – is also confronted with serious threat of water crisis which is being translated into national economic vulnerabilities. He was of the view that Karachi has undergone through drastic demographic changes since last two decades. However, the proportion of water available for public and industrial units remains same as it was 20 years before. He highlighted that in Karachi there is requirement of 1225 million gallons per day (mgd) at 54 gallons per person while the current capacity is 550 mgd from the Indus system and a 100mgd from the Hub Dam Reservoir.

Dr. Lakhani suggested that for sustainability of economic activities and industrial growth there is dire need of prompt resolution of water issues in Karachi. He proposed that projects like K-III project, and unconventional water extraction methods should be promoted. He also advised tertiary treatment systems should be established which can add another 100 mgd through water purification. Furthermore, he advised a practical course of action to include water regulating, timed water supply and better management.

Mr. Zohair Ashir, Member Board of Governors, Hisaar Foundation was of the view that Pakistan need a long term planning extended over period of 50 years for resolving the long Pakistan's water issues. Mr. Ashir stressed that every citizen of Pakistan has to play its part for ethical and efficient usage of water in our own homes through water conservation, water harvesting, and unconventional usage of water. He further said compared to many countries, Pakistan has a greater water level, however, without viable policy directions and effective management practices we will not be able to deal with water crisis. He suggested that Pakistan can follow water rationing model of Japan for maximizing water usage through color scheming and this will allow us to reuse water 5-6 times before it is discarded. Mr. Ashir highlighted the importance of planning, discussion and intellectual cooperation in dealing with the water crisis. He emphasised on the interdisciplinary framework for reaching out the robust policies and critical solutions.

Mr Shahab Usto, Lawyer and lecturer, IBA and SZABIST described the water crisis as policy failures and mistakes which have piled up over the years. He was of the view the Indus Waters Treaty has some grey areas which now need to be reinterpreted and unfortunately World Bank has shown its helplessness in front of the India's policies. He further said that at national level water distribution has become political therefore we need to build dams without causing damage to lower riparian regions. Issues like the Kala Bagh Dam must be resolved in a constructive dialogue, without disturbing the harmony among provinces for greater aim of national security.

Mr. Ahmed Masood, Lead Water Specialist for World Bank Projects in Pakistan, emphasised upon the importance of infrastructure development as Pakistan is already facing a population explosion. It will become tougher for us to deal with future crises if the quality and condition of our pipelines, reservoirs, canals and irrigation methods remains poor. Mr Masood also proposed the use of color grading schemes and the building of better reservoirs for conservation of water. He also proposed that Water must be treated by using modern techniques for reducing carbonates extensively found in water supplied to Karachi. Furthermore, Mr. Masood suggested that future exponential growth in population must be dealt with through a legal framework and establishing governance systems for the future.

CONCLUSION

During the roundtable discussion participants agreed that Pakistan is facing serious water management crisis which will have impact on the national security. The main contributing factors

for this water loss are unsustainable water resource management practices, devoid of strategies and lack of water governance. There was a consensus that Pakistan needs an effective water policy and infrastructure for management of water resources. Panelists suggested that federal government should reach a consensus among provinces for building more reservoirs to store water. It was further proposed that provinces should be encouraged to develop modern canal system to regulate water flow. Given the grey areas in Indus Water Treaty (IWT) and frequent breach of the same by India, Pakistan should press for all required and effective Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), under the Indus Water Treaty for the trans-boundary river water supply management like neutral monitors, telemetry system, joint watershed management and unrestricted access by the members of the Indus Water Commission, etc. The session ended with a resolve to do more individually as citizens and collectively as Pakistani.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

- MS. SIMI KAMAL, WATER AND DEVELOPMENT EXPERT
- MR. ZOHAIR ASHIR, MEMBER BOARD OF GOVERNORS, HISAAR FOUNDATION
- DR. MUHAMMAD BASHIR LAKHANI, HEAD OF WATER DIVISION, TECHNO CONSULTS
- MR. SHAHAB USTO, LAWYER AND LECTURER, IBA AND SZABIST
- MR. AHMED MASOOD, LEAD WATER SPECIALIST FOR WORLD BANK PROJECTS IN PAKISTAN

PICTURE GALLERY





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