

Civil Society's Statement on Pakistan Development Forum

Friday 19 November 2010, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 15 November 2010).

1) We the representatives of civil society organizations of Pakistan appreciate the democratically elected government for reconvening Pakistan Development Forum (PDF) and welcome the national and international delegates. We assure our support to this process and believe that possible solution to the issues facing Pakistan lies in collective wisdom.

2) In order to turn the dialogue on Pakistan's sustainable development more meaningful and effective we believe that Pakistan cannot be steered out of the present social, economic and political crisis without the strong partnership between the government, civil society, UN and donor community. Such partnership should be based on mutual respect and all of us need to work together towards building a better Pakistan.

3) In the spirit of such partnership we suggest that the pathways shared during the various sessions of the PDF should be based on very comprehensive and precise structural approach that is critically needed for such development. Currently this approach is lacking and one cannot distinguish the reform agenda from the business as usual.

4) We demand that the key focus of the government in its efforts for the reconstruction of the country should be based on mobilizing resources internally rather than externally. Revenue generation should be through introducing progressive taxation focusing on higher income brackets and consumption of luxury items; restoration of wealth tax; one-time tax on large urban and rural properties; imposition of agriculture income tax on big landlords rather than introducing indirect taxes that burdens the poor. In our opinion another way of internal resources mobilisation is massive budget reprioritisation and reduction in non-development expenditures.

5) We also demand that Instead of seeking more foreign loans, the government should negotiate with international community for reduction in tariff and non tariff trade barriers on Pakistani products. We welcome interior ministers' statement that Pakistan's foreign debt should be written off and demand that this stance should be incorporated in final declaration of PDF. It is pertinent to mention that the loans under discussion were taken during non democratic regime. The country has already paid over several times the original borrowings by way of inflated interest rate. Financial resources saved from the debt repayment should then be exclusively allocated for the development of the social sector.

6) We further demand that in order to save the poor and marginalized from the negative impacts of initiatives taken for macro-economic stability, social protection system and social safety nets should be rehashed and redesigned.

7) We reject government's charity based approach to social protection. The provision of universal social protection should be given in accordance to the Article 38 of the Constitution; extension of 'unemployment benefits', 'protection against disasters', 'old age benefits', 'disability allowance' etc. We also demand that as part of reform agenda the Labour laws must be extended to agriculture and the informal sector labour.

8) We stress that reform agenda for sustainable development should be based on asset building of the poor. Introduction of land reform and the redistribution of state land among landless should be done on immediate basis and the title of ownership of land should be allotted to the woman of the household.

9) While we appreciate the support of donor community for the flood affectees, we feel that the funding mechanisms instituted by the UN agencies have marginalized national NGOs. The current unequal relationship is reflected in the issues of accountability, transparency, and resource-sharing that seeks to undermine the capacity of national humanitarian organizations.

10) For an effective implementation of government policies, decentralisation of all development and relief efforts should be ensured through the establishment of local government, devolution of power and the autonomy to the provinces. We demand that all development, relief and rehabilitation must be channelled through provinces.

11) We urge the coalition governments to address the issue of politicization of the humanitarian aid. We condemn the preferential treatment based on political affiliation in the distribution of Watan cards and relief packages. Merit and the dignity of the flood affectees must prevail in relief and rehabilitation efforts.

12) Lastly, while we fully support the democratic dispensation in the country, we believe that governance will fail to deliver in the absence of people's participation and inclusion of their voices, concerns and priorities in development planning and implementation.

(Agahi, Bhan Beli, Godh, Hands, Pakistan Debt Cancellation Campaign, Pattan, PIELER, SDPI, Sungi were invited and represented the local civil society in Pakistan Development Forum).