

**ADDRESS BY
THE CHIEF GUEST
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FORMER FEDERAL MINISTER FOR WATER AND POWER
FORMER CHAIRMAN, WAPDA
ON WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY
9TH JUNE, 2012
AT “MASHHADI HALL” OF
PAKISTAN ENGINEERING CONGRESS**

**Engr. Riaz Ahmad Khan, President Pakistan Engineering Congress
Distinguished Delegates
Fellow Engineers
Ladies and Gentlemen!**

Assalam-o-Alaikum

World Environment Day conceived in 1972 is the United Nations' Principal Day on 5th June to sensitize people around the globe on pertinent environmental issues. The 2012 theme for World Environment Day is **Green Economy : Does it include you?** There are two parts of this theme; the first tackles the subject of the Green Economy. On the contrary, the Green Economy is really something that is applicable all around you and it is easy to imagine how you fit in it. **"The world is green and beautiful and God has appointed you his stewards over it. He sees how you acquit yourselves (Muslim)"**.

Green Economy is the growth in income and employment driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. These investments need to be catalyzed and supported by targeted public expenditure, policy reforms and regulation changes. The second part of the theme Green Economy for social equity and inclusiveness then technically it is all about you! The question therefore, asks you to find out more about the Green Economy and assess whether, in your country, you are being included in it.

The global financial crisis that began in 2007, and is still resonant today, is considered by many economists as the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. One of the key lessons, we can draw from this experience is that running economies the way we've always done, doing business as usual, is clearly not an option. The new Green Economy is, therefore, a proposal for an alternative and far more sustainable way of doing

business. The UNEP-led Green Economy Initiative, launched in late 2008, provides a comprehensive and practical working mechanism, through analysis and policy support for investing in green sectors and in greening environmental unfriendly sectors. The Green Economy Initiative has three main activities, which are to produce a Green Economy Report and related research materials, which will analyse the macroeconomic, sustainability, and poverty reduction implications of green investment in a range of sectors; to provide advisory services on ways to move towards a green economy in specific countries; and to engage a wide range of research, non-governmental organizations, business and UN partners in implementing the Green Economy Initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

A number of serious environmental problems are inherent in the country, which are of great ecological concern in terms of its sustainable economic future. These include soil erosion, pesticide misuse, deforestation, desertification, urban pollution, waterlogging & salinity, freshwater pollution and marine water pollution, just to name a few. The major constraint to overcome these problems, in-fact perhaps the main contributor to their intensity is the population growth, which is very high in contrast to the natural limited resources that are available to the people. Also included in the constraints is the unsustainable use and management of these resources. Around 180 million people live in this country, making it the seventh most populous country in the world. The rate of population growth is one of the fastest and according to estimates it would double in just 25 years. What is obvious from this is, if the population continues to grow at this rate, it would take a severe toll in the environment. The reason being that the country is not endowed with the resources required for sustaining a huge population. Although it is primarily an agricultural country, the landscape is predominantly arid. Water, already a scarce commodity in most parts of the country, is now facing further shortages. This shortage is hindering the country's potential to develop agriculture. There are limited indigenous sources of energy, fossil fuel reserves are low and there is no great potential in the biomass energy. The use of raw materials is also inefficient and many reusable resources are discarded as waste. Only 3% of the industrial plants meet international waste treatment standards. There are serious effluent problems and lack of sanitation affecting the natural resources and posing unmitigated health risks.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Considering Pakistan's environmental scenario, it becomes increasingly obvious that water issues are the most pressing. Human health, agriculture, rangelands, forests, waterbodies, and aquatic life, in fact the whole ecosystem is affected by problems associated with water. Not only is there a scarcity of drinking water but

pollution of water bodies by effluents from industries and the sewerage system have compounded the problem.

The discharge of sewage and contaminated water in rivers and water bodies not only affects marine production, but also the use of such water for agriculture results in the contamination of the food chain. In Pakistan, sewage water is re-channelled to irrigate crops, which contaminates them with pathogens. As a result 50% of the crops are contaminated. Groundwater may also be contaminated by untreated sewage. Water borne diseases are the largest killers in the country and health problems resulting from polluted water cost a large amount of money.

Waterlogging and salinity pose serious threats to the primarily agricultural economy and may also affect the remaining forests in the basin. In any case, the increase in this problem could mean the clearing up of the adjacent forests to make room for more agricultural land.

Because of the gravity of the situation, measures have been taken to rectify this problem as a result of which a large area of land has been reclaimed through the Salinity Control and Reclamation Programmes.

Poverty is a major concern in the environmental degradation of the country. Conversely, environmental degradation and poor natural resource base is the third most important factor contributing to rural poverty (Jazairy 1992).

Due to environmental degradation and poor resource management Pakistan continues to suffer economic loss. The impacts of degradation and biodiversity loss on productivity and public health are in the tune of 3% of GDP per year. This, however, is a conservative estimate and it would be higher if toxic waste disposal, biodiversity, river and coastal resource depletion were taken into account. Health problems due to polluted water have the economic cost of \$ 750 million per annum approximately. This combined with air pollution leads to a cost of \$ 1.05 billion. Moreover, for an agricultural country, water is of immense economic value. The agriculture sector has been growing at the rate of 20% for the past 20 years, but this is heading towards a downfall because water and land have been over used and wasted. Loss of productivity and health problems related to water is around 68% of the total negative impact of environmental degradation.

We the engineers have a challenge. We have to develop our Country, use our indigenous and natural resources and at the same time keep the carbon emission to the bare minimum. We have to design the machinery and devise

mechanism which produces minimum carbon. Preservation of environment, sustainable growth and poverty eradication is our responsibility. The challenge can only be addressed if we the pioneers of development make the projects environment friendly and provide incentive for low carbon emissions and green Pakistan. We all have to inculcate a habit of life style and choices for development that aims towards low carbon economy.

I congratulate Pakistan Engineering Congress for arranging the seminar on such an important subject. I hope the recommendations of the seminar would provide us the way forward for green Pakistan with least carbon emission economy. I declare the seminar open.

Thank you all.

Pakistan Paindabad