Panel: Food Security in Pakistan: Current Situation and the Way Forward

Food security remains a significant concern in Pakistan, mainly because of economic access and poor food utilisation for many households, particularly those from the poor segments of society. The situation is further exacerbated by a series of recurrent shocks such as floods, earthquakes and insecurity in some parts of the country. Studies suggest as many as half of the population in Pakistan consume less than adequate calories required for a healthy living. This in turn is reflected in poor nutrition indicators; for instance, 44% of the children under five are stunted, meaning too low for their age, a manifestation of high chronic malnutrition. Moreover, studies indicate no improvement in the food security and nutrition situation over the past decade or so.

Out of some 800 million undernourished people in the world, South Asia as a region contributes to the largest proportion of that case load, India and Pakistan in particular have the largest number of undernourished populations. Thus, making progress in South Asia, particularly in these two countries is of immense significance while making progress for the whole world.

There have been important policy initiatives by the Government of Pakistan in recent years. These include the national Zero Hunger Programme by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR), establishment of the national food security council, and the Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) movement coordinated by the Ministry of Planning. The Government in its Vision 2025 document has clearly stipulated its aim to reduce the proportion of food insecure households from 60% to half by 2025.

This year is particularly important as the final year of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and also the year when the global community is embarking upon the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where goal 2 is essentially about reducing hunger. This is also in line with the Global Hunger Challenge initiative announced by the UN Secretary General few years ago. The Government of Pakistan and the development partners, thus, need to accelerate efforts for eliminate hunger and malnutrition.
This panel is aimed at providing a platform for important stakeholders, including the Government, UN organizations, and civil society for deliberations on key aspects of food security in Pakistan, and interaction on the way forward.

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