Panel: Water Stewardship, Sustainability, and the Way Forward for Pakistan

In September 2015 leaders from around the world agreed upon the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The key facets of this document are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which build upon and expand upon the Millennium Development Goals. Goal No. 6 pertains to water and aims to “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”. The goal is further divided into 6 target areas. It is in this context that a panel is being organized at this Conference. The focus of the event will be on identifying stressors that are having an impact on Pakistan’s water resources. The discussants will highlight laws, policies and options available to key decision makers in terms of making progress towards the water related Sustainable Development Goal.

Pakistan is expected to go from a water stressed country to a water scarce country by 2030. The country has receding forest reserves, polluted rivers and lakes, and depleting aquifers. Our ever-growing population is dependent upon these sources for water access. As Pakistan becomes more urbanized, there are worries about availability of water in Pakistani cities. Furthermore, as seen in the ongoing debate on the status of the Indus Waters Treaty, there are deep concerns in terms of transboundary cooperation and management of water resources. The recent trends in annual flooding show that Pakistan has already begun to feel the impact of climate change. This will be exacerbated in the coming decades with the melting of glaciers, which will have grave repercussions in terms of how we manage our water. These are just a few issues that should make water an integral issue for Pakistan’s policy makers in the coming months and years. Are we prepared to address these concerns? How will we address issues pertaining to equity and justice when it comes to water resource management? What options are available to our water managers and communities? What role do civil society organizations, academia and the business sector need to play in terms of sustainable management of our limited water resources? The panel will try and address these questions and more.

Panel Organizer: Dr. Imran Khalid, Research Fellow, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan