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Climate Policy 2021 through Maritime Lens of Pakistan

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It is a good portent that the Government of Pakistan issued the updated version of the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) in October 2021. Although some gaps are still present, it is a step in the right



direction considering the importance of periodic review for policy and legal instruments. It is hoped that the remaining gaps will have due consideration in the next policy review cycle. The most inspiring thing is the addition of ‘Policy Objective 9’ regarding policy coherence and integration into the sectoral economies to achieve the milestones for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the light of UN’s Sustainable Development Report 2020 (SDR 2020) and Pakistan’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Statement. Policy coherence is a critical aspect and big challenge mostly in developing countries, though developed countries are still striving to achieve a satisfactory level of policy stability while reducing policy failure. Being a developing nation, Pakistan is no exception. Coherence to NCCP 2021 is particularly important in the context of Pakistan’s national and provincial sectoral policies, development plans and strategies where it is a missing link. To put in place a fully coherent governance mechanism, the actual spirit of NCCP 2021 needs to be reciprocated and duly integrated into all sectors at federal and provincial levels without which desired results cannot be achieved.



While comparing the updated document i.e., NCCP 2021 with its first version as was approved in 2012, it is visible that efforts have been made to cater to the important requirements which were emerged during the last decade, such as the Paris Agreement on climate change, SDGs, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, NDC Statement and the notion of Blue Economy in the backdrop of Rio+20. Regarding requirements for maritime climate agenda, the majority of the things pertaining to the sectoral economies involved and the health of the ecosystem are addressed in the overall document i.e., directly under dedicated Section 4.6.4 titled ‘Coastal and Marine Ecosystems’ , and indirectly at various places under different sections of the policy as deemed appropriate, except for some important things, remain un-attended. As far as the notion of Blue Economy is concerned, NCCP 2021 has recognized it by underlining its importance as an emerging concept that encourages sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs, while preserving health of marine and coastal ecosystem. NCCP 2021 accepts that ‘the Blue Economy sector presents many investment opportunities in the Maritime Sector in Pakistan’ which is encouraging and would help in promoting and maintaining the sustainability aspects of the marine ecosystem in the *Anthropocene*. It is pertinent that the policy statement and measures regarding ‘Blue Economy’ are inclined towards climate adaptation response strategies. Whereas commitment towards climate mitigation strategies under the umbrella of ‘Blue Economy’ is still ambiguous in the overall document.

The old text under NCCP 2012’s Section 4.6.4 was inclined towards adaptation measures. Similarly, addition of six more new policy measures under the same Section have reaffirmed the importance of adaptation needs for maritime climate change. These



measures include (i) commitment to assist Ministry of Maritime Affairs (MoMA) regarding ‘Blue Economy’ endeavors; (ii) determination to develop Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) system for coastal and marine ecosystems to quantify benefits and improved management; (iii) commitment to build capacities of local coastal communities and specifically the Fishermen Cooperative Societies to monitor and report climate change indicators in the sea (iv) mapping of vulnerable coastal areas for protection from anthropogenic developmental effect; (v) ensuring sustainable tourism opportunities through well-designed marine management, and (vi) commitment to discourage in-land migrations for ensuring diversified local livelihood opportunities.

In addition to the notion of ‘Blue Economy’ , new text in Section 4.6.4 of NCCP 2021 titled Coastal and Marine Ecosystems also underlines the importance of mangroves, particularly for carbon storage through new plantation drive, which would be having a worth of about US\$ 500 million by the year 2050. It is important for both i.e., climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Under Section 5.7, titled ‘Carbon Sequestration



and Forestry’ , an important policy measure has been added for climate mitigation response i.e., commitment for devising a strategy for emissions reduction through mangrove drives and Reducing Emission from Deforestation & Forest Degradation Plus (REDD+). This has revitalized the significance of mangroves. Of course, it is a value addition in new document as the context of mangroves was limited to the country’s forestry sector mitigation response.

Since climate finance is an important and integral part of a country’s overall response mechanism, it is good to see that a new policy measure under Section 9 is added to explore the innovative private finance schemes such as green



bonds, blue bonds, nature bonds etc. If succeeded, it would be a good pledge for preventing, halting, and reversing the degradation of marine and coastal ecosystems in Pakistan. As far as the shortcomings are concerned, most of the missing links are related to the mitigation response. For example, nothing is added under Section 5.3 titled ‘Transport’ regarding the sea-going vessels. It has also remained un-attended under Section 5.2 titled ‘Energy Efficiency and Energy Conservation’ for which operational aspect of sea-going vessels of various types and sizes is critically important. There is a need to assess the carbon footprint of these vessels and bring energy



efficiency through the best available technological solutions and management practices. Similarly, energy conservation at ports and harbors, as well as the concept of a climate smart city at Gwadar are also missing links.