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Tagging Blue Economy Endeavours in Pakistan

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Although the maritime domain has vast potential, it remained a neglected segment of the national economy, due to which it is still not harnessed to an optimum level. It is pertinent that many of the building blocks of the maritime



economy, including Shipping, Ship Recycling, Fisheries, Ports & Harbours, on-shore / off-shore resources have linkages with international obligations. Unfortunately, there is still no clear vision or roadmap that indicates maritime blindness and gap regarding the capacity of the relevant actors, particularly on the emerging issues/needs for international instruments. Here, the notion of the Blue Economy has no exception due to confusion. As per the general understanding, the ocean-based economy is being considered the Blue Economy without any distinction between the business-as-usual case of maritime economy, which is not correct. Except for a limited circle of literary persons, an ambiguity is observed at large scale regarding the actual linkage of the Green Economy with the Blue Economy and its origin. It is very discouraging that the concept of a Blue Economy is sometimes projected as the idea of Pauli Gunter, which is totally wrong.

The notion of Blue Economy can neither be linked with the Pauli Gunter's 'Blue Economy' nor with the business-as-usual case. Two years ago, for the purpose of distinction and conceptual clarity, I highlighted the origin and true notion of the Blue Economy through my two articles on the subject, titled; (i) 'Emergence of a green economy in a blue world' and (ii) 'Sustainability vs greenwashing under alluded blue



economy’ published in Pakistan Observer on 6 February 2020 & 14 February 2020 respectively. I clearly justified the case that the evolution of the ‘blue economy’ concept is rooted in the Bruntland Commission’s Report 1986 and the subsequent development of the green economy. It was formalized during Rio+20 as an ocean-centric approach and has emerged as a branch of the Green Economy i.e., “a green economy in a blue world” , with the objective to provide a better adaptation of the paradigm to coastal and sea-resource based countries. It encompasses Green Economy’ s principles and main objectives. This concept is a paradigm shift, and its proliferation has been witnessed during the last decade. The correct terminology for the business-as-usual economic scenario of the maritime segment is the ‘maritime economy’ . Whereas the application of the Blue Economic approach on the business-as-usual case of maritime economy will ensure sustainable growth in many key traditional and emerging economic sectors. Moving on Blue Economic agenda without knowing its requirement vis-à-vis sectoral economy involved would not be wise. There is a need to understand how blue economy can be rewarding not only in real-time entrepreneurship but also to have extra edge for market competitiveness.

The World Bank in collaboration with the Ministry of Maritime Affairs (MOMA) took an initiative during 2021 to support the development of Blue Economy Roadmap for Pakistan. It is a positive step. However, there is a need to have deeper understanding of the sustainability requirements for a superimposed Blue Economy over the maritime economy vis-à-vis country’s clear roadmap for it. The sustainability aspect requires environmental, social and economic safeguards. However, the agenda of sustainability



is multifaceted and cannot be achieved without collective efforts from grass-root to global levels. It also needs financing and incentivizing the sectoral economies involved in the overall maritime domain.

As part of the Blue Economy Roadmap, like Blue Bonds for Ecosystem Restoration, the Government of Pakistan may also introduce an incentive-based 'Blue Tag' scheme on the pattern of the eco-labelling scheme, which emerged globally during the 20th century. Its responsibility can be given to Pakistan



Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA). 'Blue Tag' is a novel idea that can be instrumental to providing a market competitiveness edge and a good reputation for Pakistani brands in the international market.

There is a need to comply with all national and international sustainability requirements in case if Government of Pakistan desires to put a 'Blue Tag' not only on the Pakistani Flag Carrier but also on other sectoral economies. Blue tagged ships can also be linked with priority berthing at Pakistani ports, which will not only promote Pakistani registry but also be an attractive feature for transshipment hubs. Similarly, the Blue Tag scheme for marine fisheries can be introduced for different segments or the value chain involved.



In the context, many questions arise including, but limited to: is the country ready to invest in emissions inventory on a regular basis for sea-going vessels and other logistics in supply chain for maritime trade? Whether federal and provincial fisheries departments or the governments ready to invest on periodic stock-taking surveys to monitor sustainability factors for the ocean ecosystem vis-a-vis food security and marine resources? Are the stakeholders ready to bring efficiencies in processes in the overall value chain? Such questions related to different sectoral economies in the maritime domain are important and need due consideration during the formulation of the National Blue Economic Roadmap.