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Making City Planning Regional in 21st Century Pakistan: Towards a National Charter for Climate Change Survival

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Germanwatch's Global Climate Risk Index 2017 rated Pakistan as the seventh most affected country by climate change in the world after taking into consideration human and material losses, impact on the economy and number of climate events. The country geographically is defined by the approximate territory of the Indus River Basin, which is extremely affected by global warming in all of its eco-regions by changes in temperature, glacial melting, monsoon rain pattern shifts, drought, heatwaves and other extreme weather events. Pakistan also happens to be the sixth most populous country, with an alarming urbanization rate, with cities becoming natural receptacles of its many internal climate refugees. This paper provides a vision for Pakistani city planning in the context of the challenges of climate change facing the country according to scientific projections. It provides an overview of the steps the state is taking towards Climate Change Adaptation (CCA), including the signing of international charters (the UNFCCC's Paris Agreement), establishment of a Ministry of Climate Change, enacting of relevant laws and action plans, identifying gaps and weaknesses of these measures which are created as conventional tools for conventional situations.

The paper argues that a true, practical response to the alarming situation of CC can only come through creating a radical action plan - a 'Pakistan National Charter for Climate Change Survival'. A technical blueprint for this multi-sectoral Charter is spelt out in the paper, entailing most importantly a national level Strategic Impact Assessment (SIA) for the era of Climate Change. The SIA as a technical tool will link major cities with each other as well as with their regional hinterlands, and evaluate the Significance and Vulnerabilities of Natural Resources, and in this perspective create a roadmap for Inter-Regional Resource-Sharing, Water Management, Food Security, Disaster Preparedness, Urban Bye-Laws Revisions etc. Each of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) are also re-evaluated according to priority in the schema of this Charter.

Author: AHMED, Sameeta (Architect and Coordinator at EarthWaterNetwork, Pakistan.)

Co-author: Mr ANWAR, Naveed ur Rehman (BUIITEMS)

Presenter: AHMED, Sameeta (Architect and Coordinator at EarthWaterNetwork, Pakistan.)

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