

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Islamabad, March 4, 2020:** “Pak-China Trade: Opportunities for Youth” organized by Youth Economic Forum was an interactive session deliberated to discuss how youth can actively participate in and benefit from the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement:Phase 1 and 2. The main agenda of the talk was based on the specified opportunities rendered by the FTA, specifically China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and how our youth can pave their way themselves by creating opportunities through the presence of CPEC and other trade agreements between Pakistan and China. The roundtable concentrated on young minds as an audience from different institutes comprising of entrepreneurs, young teachers and students. Jalil Hamdani and Khadijah Kamili, both fellows at YEF, moderated the session. Our speakers were people with keen knowledge and stance on the topic: Mr. Mohammad Arshad (Executive Chairman, CPEC Economic Forum & Focal Person of the Government of Pakistan on CPEC Health Sector), Mrs. Sarah Farhan (Economist, CEO DeRisc Group, Lecturer at the AIR University with a masters in International Economics from the University of Nottingham) and Mr. Hassan Rasool from the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics).

The session commenced with a brief overview of the topic. Our first speaker Mr. Arshad took the floor with his note. His note highlighted and appreciated the way Chinese seize the opportunity as keen bargainers who are not impulsive, rather long-term planners in terms of development. He further talked about G2G, B2B and P2P phases of CPEC, emphasizing on the significance of B2B as the backbone to the FTA. Mr. Arshad quoted that lack of governance and leadership is the key reason for our youth not benefitting from CPEC at its fullest. This one-time opportunity needs an enabling environment and a flourishing economy. Mr. Arshad concluded his discussion by giving a third slogan for Pak-China friendship. He said, “We are two nations but one team working towards the same cause.”

Mr. Hassan Rasool further led the discussion. He started by giving the young minds a reality check that how they have to seize the opportunity and take the first step. According to him, as an individual and a society, we are responsible for making big changes. He talked about developed nations that are leading the world by the soft power of their youth. He also talked about the book, “The Rise and Fall of Nations” by Ruchir Sharma, which claims that technology is responsible for speeding up growth of a nation, while the economy is the reason for its downfall. He believes that one should strongly focus on work ethics and attitude rather than skill alone.

Mrs. Sarah Farhan started her note with a strong emphasis on the role of individual effort. She talked about the direct jobs created by CPEC and most importantly, the indirect jobs the local people and youth can create for themselves out of Pak-China Trade and Economic relations, stating that, “Economic activity generates markets.” She specifically acknowledged the efforts of entrepreneurs and innovators in today’s day and age.

The guests admired the efforts done by Youth Economic Forum in bridging a gap between youth and policymakers to create a sense of awareness among the young minds. The esteemed guests extended their full support to YEF and advised the young minds from different circles of life to contribute towards building a progressive Pakistan.

The event was concluded on a coherent viewpoint of how our youth needs to stand up for themselves and take full advantage of Pak-China Trade opportunities. Then at the end of the event, a Question-Answer session proceeded for about 30 minutes. Students, lecturers, youth activists and other attendees enthusiastically participated and asked questions from the guest speakers.

Youth Economic Forum is Pakistan’s first youth-run policy think tank, which strives to bridge the gap between young minds and policy makers. Its mission is to make policies that are more youth inclusive. This session was in alignment with its vision and facilitated the youth of the country to connect with the guest speakers on a much deeper level.