

PRESS RELEASE

28th October 2020: A fifteen-member delegation from Youth Economic forum and Global Shapers Community met with the Minister of State for Climate Change, Ms. Zartaj Gul to discuss the Climate Change issues faced by Pakistan, the policies implemented to mitigate climate change and the role of women participation in Pakistani politics.

Ms. Zartaj Gul discussed the initiatives taken by the government of Pakistan to address the pressing global issue of climate change which has become a huge concern for Pakistan in the last two decades. She further communicated that the Ministry of Climate Change is keen on collaborating with individual entities and gave an overview of projects that have already been done as part of this initiative. Moreover, she informed the delegation about the hurdles faced by her ministry due to the social construct and lack of awareness in the country. She also discussed the barriers hindering women to enter politics and the general discrimination of females from a very young age. As a believer in equality, she talked about her role in trying to level the playing field and empowering women in her constituency, Dera Ghazi Khan.

The meeting started with Ms. Sara Javed (Founding Curator of Global Shapers Community Wah) expressing her concerns regarding the current situation of the environmental degradation of Pakistan and stating the delegations aim to learn about the ongoing work being done by the Ministry of Climate Change and do their part by carrying out sustainable and environment-friendly practices at all levels. Ms. Zartaj Gul appreciated the level of concern shown by the general public in tackling climate change and acknowledged the concerning current situation of the environment of Pakistan with only 6% forest coverage, a huge carbon footprint, reduced air quality and the excessive utilization of single-use plastic.

However, she highlighted the efforts done by the Ministry of Climate Change over the last two years which primarily consisted of the PM's initiative of introducing the Clean Green Pakistan Campaign which consists of several projects designed to promote sustainability of the environment. Ms. Gul talked about the introduction of Clean Green Index under this campaign which gives funds based on performances to the 19 cleanest cities in Pakistan and how it has helped them collaborate with provincial governments, organizations and individuals who can participate through providing proof of their initiatives for the environment on their online portal. She discussed the challenges faced by the government in Lahore due to the previous waste being dumped in river Ravi and the establishment of a solid waste management company to counter the problem. Moreover, she discussed the water conservation and projects for sustainable use of water sources, highlighting the underground water tank for rain drainage in cities so clean drinking water is not wasted in fountains and cleaning purposes. Additionally, she highlighted the Ministry's initiatives regarding liquid waste management, ban on plastic bags, 2% increase in forest covered land, regulating brick kilns and urban plantation while answering Ms. Parisey Tariq's question regarding the immediate steps being taken to reduce climate change.

While replying to Ms. Huma Rasheed's concern about the dire need of public awareness and instilling a sense of responsibility in individuals from a young age, Ms. Zartaj Gul informed the inclusion of environment-friendly practices in the uniformed syllabus to be released by the Minister of Federal Education Shafqat Mehmood. Mr. Khawar Mehmood addressed the role of startups and individual entities for creative and effective problem solution to which Ms. Gul informed them about the previous projects done by the Ministry with Roots and Chamber of Commerce for building rainwater harvesting plants. She further added that the Ministry goes over proposals by individual entities and is keen on collaborating with them in order to increase efficiency of projects. Furthermore, Ms. Mominah Kamran inquired about the research facilities of Ministry of climate change since it plays a very important part in devising effective policies, to which Ms. Gul answered by communicating the improvement in the research wing which has assessed the severity of issues related to the environment such as the Baluchistan drought which had not been assessed since 1969.

When asked about the role of women in Pakistani Politics Ms. Zartaj Gul addressed it as an issue at the micro-level which leads to an overall decreased female labor force participation in the country. She discussed the lack of child-care facilities for women in workplaces and the social unacceptance of working women's role as a mother, which led to her enabling women in her constituency to bring their children to their workplaces. She further addressed the staggering rate of 52% out-of-school girls at primary level due to inadequate sanitary facilities which suppresses females and has multi-fold adverse effects. She added that she is trying to solve this problem by providing adequate sanitary facilities in the schools made under the Clean Green Pakistan initiative.

Lastly, Ms. Zartaj Gul expressed enthusiasm to collaborate with educated individuals and youth to mitigate climate change and devise creative solutions for a brighter future and a cleaner environment.