Sindh Government is committed to achieve the 2030 Agenda by localising the SDGs at grass-root level for an inclusive and participatory community development. Revision in the existing Sindh Local Government Act 2013 will ensure an empowered and resourced local government system, said Minister for Local Governments, Sindh

Sindh Provincial Stakeholder Consultation Workshop on LEAD for SDGs Programme to Localise SDGs in Pakistan

On the 22 August 2019 UCLG ASPAC, LEAD for SDGs programme in collaboration with Local Council Association of Sindh conducted **'Sindh Provincial Stakeholders' Consultation Workshop on Localisation of SDGs in Pakistan'** in Karachi. Stakeholders from the parliament, including member of provincial assembly, local governments, civil society, development sector, media, youth and corporate organisations were present to discuss the programme design, intervention logic, current challenges and issues to the local governance system. In the result of the consultation, several recommendations were made to improve the capacities of local governments in the planning and budgeting of schemes, awareness and advocacy on 2030 Agenda of sustainable development and technical support in creating district plans and policies alignment with SDGs, as well as in the development of district coordination mechanism to involve all the relevant local stakeholders for synergies in the Sindh province interventions planned in the LEAD for SDGs programme.

General Secretary, Local Council Association Sindh, Mr. Amir Ali Shah offered his heartiest thanks to all stakeholder participants. He mentioned in his welcome remarks that 69% of SDGs can only be achieved through the local governments. He expressed that this consultation workshop will play a pivotal role in setting the right direction of social development through the stakeholders' deliberations it will help in making empowered and strengthened local governments in Sindh. He shared that LEAD for SDGs programme will support in localising the SDGs in the province. It will also create a few exemplary districts by enhancing the capacities of local councils, finding new horizons of local revenues generation, ensuring equitable and just distribution of resources, and to work on the development of innovative technology-based local solution for local issues, by opting best practices of the world.

He expressed his gratitude to the Guest of Honour, Mr, Pir Mujeeb UL Haq, colleagues from local governments, team members of UCLG ASPAC, LEAD for SDGs programme and the European Union Delegation to Pakistan for their continued commitment and support in providing enabling environment for inclusive and participatory development at the grass-root level.

The Convener, Sindh Parliamentary Taskforce on SDGs, Mr. Pir Mujeeb ul Haq express his gratitude to the LEAD for SDGs programme and the European Union Delegation to Pakistan for their support towards localising and mainstreaming sustainable development goals in the province. He said that we are a cross party taskforce members facilitating and supervising the implementation of SDGs in the Sindh province. As being the elected representatives, people have lots of hopes and expectations from us. SDGs global framework is all about delivering services to the communities al local council level. We should admit this that we are lacking behind in this to achieve the ambitious development agenda. We recently resolved in a taskforce meeting that through a parliamentary bill we will make sure to form district level committees on SDGs. The Chief Minister Sindh is fully committed to achieve the 2030 Agenda

and we as the taskforce working closely with the local government representative to provide effective proposals for the provincial government to further strengthen and empower the local governments in Sindh.

In the first session, UCLG ASPAC, LEAD for SDGs programme, Team Leader, Mr. Ali Imran presented programme background context and design, intervention logic and dynamics for re-validating the outputs envisioned, intervention approaches, gain support and synergies points of the programme. Stakeholders' shared their feedback, several suggestions and commitment to support for the programme, including the creation of platforms for advocacy and knowledge

management, district plans and policies alignment with 2030 Agenda, involvement of civil society through cluster groups, empowerment of local governments, devolution of powers, utilisation of innovative solutions and involvement of local communities in planning and implementation of the programme, were noted.

Mr. Ali also mentioned that beside the criticism of the government, there are also some initiatives and efforts of the government to localise the sustainable development goals i.e. the parliamentarians has passed 42 laws on SDGs and made 45 policies to accelerate the progress, which should be appreciated.

As the Chief Guest; Provincial Minister for Local Governments Sindh, Mr. Syed Nasir Hussain Shah appreciated the efforts of UCLG ASPAC; LEAD for SDGs programme team in collaboration with Local Council Association of Sindh to provide government tiers technical support and capacity building for SDGs localisation.

He shared that the current LGs are left only with one year, our party's leadership vision and manifesto reiterates to empower and strengthen this third tier of the government (the local governments) to empower communities at the union council level. He mentioned that we are in process of revising the existing Sindh Local Government Act 2013 learning from the experiences and inspiring from other provincial local government acts. The new act will ensure an empowered and resourced local government system in the Sindh province. It should be able to facilitate the local communities in making basic services accessible for all, empower common person, strengthen local governments and other public service institutions.

Answering the questions of participants; the minister responded on the participation of the women's in local governments are 33% on reserve seats and law allows women to participate on general seats as well. Our political leadership also have focus on inclusion of women in all tier of governments.

He shared that we are working very closely with Sindh Rural Support Programme – SRSO and we are proud of it. This programme is empowering people in economic development. We are further increasing financial support to other parts of the Sindh province for community's development in livelihood. He said that new survey data of Benazir Income Support Programme – BISP will also support local governments to understand local priorities and development issues.

The minister added that we will learn and take expert opinions of the revision of the new local government act and we are also planning to release an advertisement for suggestion to improve the current act, we are also expecting support from UCLG ASPAC, LEAD for SDGs programme to provide us positive and best world practices to learn from.

Mr. Shah further appreciated UCLG ASPAC, LEAD for SDGs programme of generating discussion to address challenges and issues of the local governments in localising and implementing sustainable development goals in Sindh.

In the end he assured that Local Governments Department will provide its best possible support for strengthening and empowering the local governments.

In the second session, Sindh SDGs Support Unit, Planning and Development Department Sindh and UNDP Pakistan's representative, Mr. Mumtaz Ali, Project Manager presented the overview of the UN MAPS approach of SDGs implementation. He shared presentation of key pillars of localisation of SDGs approach and methodology including the initial base work, data availability and gaps, reporting and monitoring mechanism, financing and resource

management for SDGs localisation and innovative action to create innovative and effective solutions.

He also shared Government of Sindh SDGs Localisation Framework and priority goals with short-term, mid-term and long-term priorities. He then shared overview of previous activities and ongoing actions on localisation and mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda in the business of the government. He shared that thematic committees and clusters are working on different goals, civil society, related provincial ministries and departments are part of these to synergise the efforts and accelerate the progress on SDGs.

In the closing of the consultation workshop, parliamentarians of Sindh provincial assembly also address the workshop and share their views. Mr. Munawar Ali Wassan, Member of the Provincial Assembly, Sindh stated that the revision in the local government is very much essential now as we are being the MPA cannot serve the whole community. We should work in coordination with the local government representatives to ensure the public service outreach. He mentioned that we are working to further empower the new local government system through devolving powers and allocating resources on town and union council level to create harmony, inclusivity and equality in the development of the communities. He ensured that suggestions and feedback made here will be presented to the Chief Minister & Local Government Minister.

Ms. Adeeba Hassan, MPA emphasised that women should be encouraged to participate in the local government elections on general seats beside the reserved seats. She raised her suggestion

that women local government representatives should be allocated with a special fund to serve their communities and participate in all activities of local community development irrespective of their limitations of limited funds availability to travel in their respective communities.

Ms. Sidra Imran, MPA appreciated the efforts of UCLG ASPAC on creating debate and discussion on the localisation of SDGs. She mentioned that local context and local languages should be kept in mind while producing advocacy, policy making and awareness communications of SDGs and how they are linked with the local communities.

She mentioned that there is dire need of sector based approached should be aligned with the key stats and data and it should relate to the grass-root level, so that stakeholders can assess the progress and lacking accordingly.

She also highlighted to include expert parliamentarians in the Parliamentary Taskforce on SDGs in Sindh and to produce annual report on the progress which can elaborate the success, failures, challenges and lesson learnt to build on the experience and improve the localisation of SDGs.

Ms. Sarwat Fatima, MPA mentioned that district level committee should be made on the immediate basis so that MPAs and the local government representatives can work closely to develop SDGs aligned plans and policies for each district and proceed in the development in a systematic and harmonised manner for schemes and project to accelerate the progress on SDGs.

Ms. Kalsoom Akhtar Chandio, MPA shared that LEAD for SDGs has today provided a very important platform to the local government representatives and the members of provincial assembly to reflect on the challenges, bottlenecks and issues and to deliberate on the possible solutions. This kind of forums will help us to reinforce our coordination mechanism and understand challenges.

She reiterated that council members especially the women councillors should be paid a stipend or a salary remuneration so that they can independently perform their duties in the constituencies and similarly while awarding schemes and project it should be equally approved for the women councillors for their respective community's development.

Ms. Nusrat Bano Sehar Abbasi, MPA appreciated the initiative of UCLG ASPAC, LEAD for SDGs programme for localising the SDGs at the grass-root level. She shared that in the developed world this third tier of local government is very much strong that they can serve their communities as per the true spirit of sustainable development for all. But unfortunately, in the Sindh province local government has as such no powers and authority. We need to see that after the 18th amendment we should also focus on empowerment of local government instead of only centralising the powers and authority at the provincial level.

She shared that previously in the MDGs, we were remained failed to achieve the set targets, it was just because of the lack of capacities, understanding and implementation. She added that a local government representative is well connected with his/her community and understand the local issues, challenges and problems.
She also assured the participants that she will develop a resolution in collaboration of treasury and opposition benches and move it in the assembly for improvement of local government act and make it as per the best practices for an empower, authoritative and resourced local government.

In the conclusion remarks, President Local Council Association of Sindh, Mr. Syed Kumail Hyder Shah said that it is very unfortunate for local governments that whenever a new provincial government forms, in the first step they removed the local government system and bring a new act which differs from the earlier one that limits the powers and authorities of the local government representatives. I would request to all the authorities and decision makers to make an act which remains unchanged for minimum a two to three decades. So that it will allow the LGs system to flourish and perform.

As shared earlier by the parliamentarians that in the western world local government is empowered and resourced enough to serve its local communities. But in Pakistan the resource collection is different, e.g. a factory of a district gives tax to federal level and then coming down to the local government a very thin portion come in the part of that district.

He thanked to all respectful parliamentarians, stakeholders' participants representing the civil society members, development and corporate sector, media, youth, women, academia and research and thinktanks.