

Provincial governments express support to get accurate knowledge of urbanization

As urban population is increasing, it is important to give more attention to sustainable growth and development



20 April 2017, Islamabad, Pakistan: Following on from the highly attended press event held last year, a validation meeting of experts working on the national State of Pakistan Cities Report was hosted by UN-Habitat in Islamabad on 20 April 2017 to mark the culmination of provincial consultative meetings held throughout the country. Data for the State of Pakistan’s Cities Report has been compiled with full support from all the provinces of the country and they have expressed their intention to produce the State of Provincial Cities Reports as well. In addition, the consultations have reaffirmed the support of all Provinces for increased public participation and for their plans to take greater account of environmental concerns and be more inclusive particularly in addressing the needs of women, youth and the disabled.

The validation meeting brought forward interesting findings presented in the provincial meetings. It highlighted that with the exception of Quetta where joint and extended families still prevail, the average household size has decreased in all the other cities, suggesting a trend towards smaller families. Another trend that emerged was that women’s participation rate in the labour force in all ten cities has increased. Moreover, those unable to find jobs in rural areas and those looking for better opportunities continue to be accommodated in the cities in increasing numbers. It is not only the existing cities that are growing but more settlements are becoming urbanised, particularly along the transport routes emanating from the cities. It was hence validated that for cities to be able to perform as engines of growth, more emphasis will have to be put on enabling strategies that provide better housing, infrastructure, and access to finance.

In relation to the timely development of the report, Mr. Zahid Hamid, the Federal Minister for Climate Change in Pakistan, expressed his support by saying that, “Urbanization is as one of the

challenging issues faced by Pakistan. Yet, at the same time it also offers immense opportunities for investments in addition to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Only far-reaching and calculated measures are the means to tackle it and for this purpose, the Government of Pakistan is leading the development of the State of Pakistan Cities' Report to ensure that vital information can help planners, decision makers and society to produce better and improved urban solutions.”

By 2030, Pakistan's population is expected to reach 260 million and half of the population will live in urban areas. However, the ever-increasing urban population coupled with the insufficient knowledge of the cities' dynamics is resulting in lack of timely service delivery, resource allocation, and urban solutions by cities' authorities.

The way in which Pakistan's cities and towns develop will play an important part in the achievement of the goals laid out in the Government's "Vision 2025", including the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, which have motivated the Government of Pakistan to take necessary initiatives to get accurate knowledge of urbanization. Spearheaded by the Ministry of Climate Change (MOCC) with technical assistance of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and funded by the Australian Government, a State of Pakistan's Cities Report is being developed. The report is an advocacy and knowledge product that presents a well-informed and action-oriented analysis of the state of urbanization across Pakistan with quantitative and qualitative city-based data, taking a broader view that incorporates the economic alongside social, demographic, political and cultural aspects, for improving the living conditions and well-being of citizens in Pakistan's cities and contribute to stabilization and economic growth.

The State of Pakistan's Cities Report will provide urban information and updated data on ten first level major cities of Pakistan which account for 54% of the urban population of the country, establish appropriate key urban indicators and baselines, analyse development trends and challenges and present potentials for investment and growth. It will build the capacity of relevant stakeholders for evidence-based decision making and monitoring in urban sector. The report will have an extensive policy impact created at city, provincial, and national levels particularly in relation to urban service delivery, land and housing, role of cities including their potential growth capacities and challenges, and will support the development of National Urban Framework or Guidelines and provincial level urban policies, and investment plans.