**Green CPEC and Sustainable Development**

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March 9, 2024

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a transformative endeavour poised to redefine Pakistan’s landscape and future trajectory. Predominantly centred on infrastructure and energy initiatives, CPEC offers a substantial opening to emphasize environmental sustainability and advocate for green development in the area. This initiative harbours the potential to propel Pakistan into a novel phase of advancement, navigating the intricate interplay of growth, sustainability, and inclusivity.

In the domain of Pakistan-China collaboration, particularly within the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), various foundational principles can guide this partnership towards its green potential. These principles epitomize the essence of this alliance, weaving a narrative of development, sustainability, and mutual growth. ‘Alliance’ emphasizes people-to-people exchanges, ‘Bankability’ ensures economic viability and sustainability, while ‘Climate-smart policies’ align with global environmental goals.

Moreover, ‘Diplomacy’ and’ development’ reinforce international engagements with environmental imperatives. ‘Efficiency,’ on the other hand, addresses economic and environmental challenges holistically, and ‘Financial governance’ emphasizes sustainable investments. ‘Greening’ CPEC integrates environmental considerations, while ‘Human development through communities’ disseminates benefits to grassroots levels. Lastly, ‘Integration’ fosters regional collaboration in economic, environmental, and energy domains, transcending bilateral relations for sustainable development.

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While CPEC has faced historical criticism for its environmental impact, it could emerge as Pakistan’s key strategy in combating climate change. Initially, the project prioritized rapid development over sustainability, particularly in coal-powered energy projects that raised substantial environmental concerns. However, a shift towards a more environmentally friendly CPEC is achievable.

One of the most promising aspects of CPEC is its emphasis on renewable energy projects. With abundant solar, wind, and hydro resources, Pakistan has immense potential to shift towards clean energy sources. CPEC has already facilitated the development of several renewable energy projects, including wind farms and solar parks. By investing in renewable energy infrastructure, CPEC reduces carbon emissions, enhances energy security, and mitigates the impact of climate change. Pakistan’s dedication to sustainability is also evident through imposing a moratorium on new coal projects and implementing ambitious renewable energy policies. The Thar Block-1 Integrated Coal Mine Power Project has provided over 18,000 jobs to locals and delivers cost-effective energy to millions of households.

Moreover, notable progress has been achieved in green and sustainable energy projects, such as the Karot Hydropower Project, which includes a robust biodiversity management plan, safeguarding aquatic and wildlife habitats, and measures to preserve river water quality. China’s move towards greener policies, characterized by decreased funding for fossil fuels and heightened investment in renewable energy within CPEC, provides optimism for a more sustainable future.

Infrastructure development under CPEC offers an opportunity to integrate green principles into urban planning and construction practices. Green infrastructure initiatives such as eco-friendly buildings, sustainable transportation systems, and green spaces can help mitigate environmental degradation, improve air quality, and enhance the overall livability of cities along the corridor. The Matiari to Lahore Transmission Line ensures consistent and clean electricity to nearly 10 million households, even during Pakistan’s flood season. By prioritizing environmentally sound infrastructure projects, CPEC can pave the way for sustainable urbanization and resilient communities. Special Economic Zones (SEZs) within CPEC can prioritize low-carbon strategies, while collaborations and workshops, like the Green China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Alliance, offer invaluable platforms for dialogue and action towards sustainable development.

CPEC also presents an opportunity to address environmental challenges such as deforestation, habitat loss, and biodiversity conservation. Through initiatives like afforestation programs, wildlife conservation projects, and ecosystem restoration efforts, CPEC can contribute to preserving Pakistan’s natural heritage and promoting ecosystem health. By incorporating environmental safeguards and conservation measures into project planning and implementation, CPEC can minimize adverse environmental impacts and ensure the long-term sustainability of development initiatives. Efforts to enhance Gwadar’s environmental resilience and economic prosperity include initiatives like the Pak-China Friendship Green Park and the Gwadar Smart Environment Sanitation System.

The collaboration between China and Pakistan under CPEC also provides a platform for technology transfer and knowledge sharing in green technologies and practices. By leveraging China’s expertise in renewable energy, waste management, and pollution control, CPEC can accelerate the adoption of sustainable solutions and spur green innovation in Pakistan. Furthermore, investments in research and development initiatives focused on environmental sustainability can drive economic growth and create new opportunities for green industries and entrepreneurship.

While the green potential of CPEC is significant, it is not without challenges. Issues such as inadequate regulatory frameworks, institutional capacity constraints, and financing barriers may hinder the effective implementation of green initiatives. However, these challenges also present opportunities for collaboration, capacity building, and policy innovation. By addressing these challenges collectively and adopting a holistic approach to sustainable development, CPEC can realize its green potential and contribute to Pakistan’s more resilient, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable future.

The green potential of CPEC offers a unique opportunity to align economic growth with environmental conservation and sustainable development objectives. By prioritizing renewable energy, promoting green infrastructure, fostering environmental conservation, and encouraging green innovation, CPEC can catalyze positive environmental change in Pakistan. As CPEC continues to evolve, it is essential to leverage its transformative potential to build a greener, more sustainable future for future generations.

To ensure the green and sustainable development of CPEC, it is crucial to commit to environmental strategies, adapt to global sustainability trends, and rigorously monitor and evaluate projects throughout their execution. Through collaborative efforts and stakeholder engagement, CPEC has the potential to become a flagship model for green development within the broader Belt and Road Initiative framework. By aligning with human development principles, implementing green policies, and fostering regional integration, CPEC can effectively address contemporary challenges while promoting inclusive growth. This approach, blending economic progress with sustainable practices, is pivotal for CPEC to catalyze comprehensive and enduring development in Pakistan.

In essence, the success of CPEC’s green potential hinges on its ability to harmonize economic growth with sustainable principles, thereby fostering mutual prosperity while upholding environmental stewardship. Together, Pakistan and China can forge a path towards a more sustainable and equitable future, setting a new standard for international cooperation in the modern era.

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