**Climate change and the NSP**

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Pakistan’s recently launched National Security Policy (NSP) should be commended for recognising climate change as a vital factor in human security and articulating the goal of a “climate resilient Pakistan that prioritises climate adaptation, sustainable water management, and disaster preparedness”. Sadly, this comprehensive security blueprint does not see the need to strengthen the country’s institutional capacities to address the climate crisis which is both complex and multifaceted.

The NSP takes cognizance of Pakistan’s acute vulnerability to the negative effects of climate change, such as extreme weather events which have increased manifold and threaten our water resources thanks to the accelerated melting of the Himalayan glaciers and climate-sensitive monsoon winds. The NSP underlines that with a per capita availability of only 908 cubic meters of water Pakistan is already water scarce while its predominantly agrarian economy is critically dependent on irrigation. The NSP highlights the imperative of protecting Pakistan’s transboundary water rights given the fact that 80 percent of the waters in its Indus Basin are carried by rivers originating outside its borders.

Climate policy goals include promoting “a climate resilient Pakistan that prioritizes climate adaptation, sustainable water management, and disaster preparedness”.

The policy calls for mainstreaming climate adaptation and response, particularly in socio- economically vulnerable regions to steer Pakistan towards climate resilient development ; ensure a cohesive national response to ( the) looming water scarcity through improved water storage capacity, sustainable water management, and protecting Pakistan’s transboundary water rights, robust disaster preparedness, management, and response mechanisms.

The NSP’s references to Pakistan’s energy security are also relevant to our climate agenda. The government’s energy related targets such as increasing the share of renewable energy to 30 percent of the energy stock in 2030 and together with increased generation of hydropower to 60 percent of the total energy constitute the major part of Pakistan’s contribution to mitigation of climate change. These targets have been noted in Pakistan’s revised Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) submitted to the UN Climate Secretariat.

Regrettably, the NSP unquestionably endorses the government’s climate related plans, claiming that “Pakistan’s efforts in climate change have been recognized globally”. Indeed, Prime Minister Imran Khan’s speech during the climate conference convened by the UN secretary-general was praised by the British prime minister. But to describe his remarks as global recognition of the country’s climate policy is an instance of indefensible exaggeration.

The NSP also refers to Pakistan’s climate change policy, the Ten Billion Tree Plantation drive, and commitment to halve the country’s carbon emissions subject to availability of international grant finance. It also claims that efforts are underway to free up financial resources for implementation of the climate change policy and transforming water management. The government’s ambitious tree planting initiative does merit appreciation – although its implementation by the provinces appears highly uncertain.

Pakistan’s Climate Change Policy, developed in 2012, has remained largely unimplemented as it was not reflected in any subsequent annual development plan. The fate of its updated version is unlikely to be any different. In defiance of repeated calls by the UN Climate Change Secretariat and availability of funds and technical assistance, Pakistan has failed to develop its climate change mitigation and adaptation plans and strategies comprising fundable projects. A scientific and technical needs assessment in respect of climate change was carried out with external funding nearly a decade ago but the government has failed to take any step to implement the recommendations of the assessment .We lack the technical apparatus for monitoring and calculating our emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases!

Most regrettably, the NSP fails to mention the landmark Climate change Act enacted in 2017 providing for an elaborate institutional structure for climate action comprising a National Climate Change Council for making policies; a Climate Change Authority for developing and implementing projects; and a Climate Change Fund to mobilise and expend funds for climate initiatives.

The NSP has also failed to acknowledge the National Water Policy adopted in April 2018 with the approval of all the provinces. The non- implementation of the NWP has perpetuated inaction on urgently needed reforms for the sustainable management of our precious but fast diminishing water assets.

The success of the National Security Policy and, indeed, all our painstakingly crafted policies for addressing the various challenges facing Pakistan is predicated on the establishment of robust institutional mechanisms run by competent personnel for translating the objectives of the policy blueprints into tangible activities. The lack of implementation capacity turns plans and strategies into pipe dreams.

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