

Media Update

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UNDP

PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme launches the Business and Human Rights (B+HR) project in Pakistan in partnership with the Government of Japan

Karachi, 16 June 2022—As part of a global partnership with the Government of Japan in 17 countries, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched its Business and Human Rights (B+HR) project in Pakistan yesterday, aimed at promoting responsible business conduct, with a particular focus on promoting corporate Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD).

The launch event was attended by representatives from the Embassy and Consulate-General of Japan, UNDP, Japanese corporations operating in Pakistan, the Pakistan Japan Business Forum, civil society, and academia. The participants shared their views on the current challenges and opportunities in accelerating B+HR in Pakistan, with a shared vision that the integration of human rights principles in business practices would promote not only the rights of the workers, but also increase business opportunities for the corporations.

UNDP Pakistan provided an overview of the B+HR project to key stakeholders, including Japanese companies in Pakistan and local partners. The event aimed to advocate the relevance of HRDD, a key focus area of the project. It was also an opportunity to raise awareness amongst provincial stakeholders about Pakistan's National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP), launched in September 2021.

UNDP Pakistan's Assistant Resident Representative Mr. Rana Kaiser Ishaque thanked the Government of Japan for its support in strengthening human rights protections across business activity in Pakistan and said, "Through this partnership, UNDP aims to raise awareness on the importance of corporate HRDD." Mr. Tadayoshi Hiraki, Commercial Attaché at the Embassy of Japan, highlighted that this project would provide an opportunity for Japanese companies to mainstream the human rights-based approach, thereby enhancing their corporate social responsibility and attracting further investment. Mr. Shahzad Ahmad Khan, Director International Cooperation at the Federal Ministry of Human Rights, shared key initiatives taken by the Ministry to promote responsible business practices in Pakistan and reiterated, "The project will further enhance multistakeholder coordination required for the effective implementation of the NAP."

Following the opening remarks, UNDP highlighted the two objectives of the project—provision of technical guidance to the private sector on the implementation of HRDD; and supporting the Government of Pakistan in the implementation of the NAP (the development of which UNDP has supported the Ministry of Human Rights with since 2018). This was followed by two panel discussions with a detailed emphasis on the above-mentioned objectives.

During the first panel on the role of duty-bearers in protecting human rights in business activity in Pakistan, speakers discussed the importance of policy documents such as the NAP in promoting responsible business activity in Pakistan, and measures to bolster their effective implementation. Speakers in the panel included Shahzad Ahmad Khan from the Ministry of Human Rights, Anis Haroon from the National Commission for Human Rights, Noreen Bashir from the Sindh Human Rights Department, and Zulfiqar Shah from the Sindh Human Rights Commission.

During the second panel, speakers discussed both opportunities and challenges for the practice of corporate human rights due diligence in Pakistan and provided recommendations for stakeholder collaboration to build both awareness and capacity of the private sector in this regard. Mr. Kazunori Yamaguchi from the Japan External Trade Organization, Mr. Kalim Farooqui from the Pakistan-Japan Business Forum, Ms. Kiran Khawaja from Indus

Motors Ltd/Toyota, and Ms. Farhat Perveen from NOW Communities were the speakers of the second panel.

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