

Media Update

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PRESS RELEASE

UN Habitat Press Release

Seminar on “Financing Sustainable Urban Future for All”

On the 21st of November 2023, Islamabad observed the World Cities Day (WCD), an initiative established by the UN-Habitat to signify the culmination of Urban October Activities. UN Habitat in collaboration with Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, organized a seminar centered around the theme of "World Cities Day" focusing on "Financing Sustainable Urban Future for All." This dynamic and thought-provoking event took place at the Department of Nutritional Science & Environmental Design, AIOU. It served as a platform uniting experienced professionals and experts deeply passionate about urban living, aiming to honor and acknowledge the significance of cities while highlighting their crucial role in shaping the future of urban spaces.

Distinguished experts like Mr. Jawed Ali Khan, Country Program Manager at UN-Habitat Pakistan; Ar. Gul Najam Jamy, Senior Consultant at The World Bank Pakistan; Prof. Dr. Irshad Ahmad Arshad, Dean Faculty of Sciences at AIOU; Dr. Muhammad Latif Gondal, Director of ORIC at AIOU; and Prof. Dr. Nasir Mehmood, Vice Chancellor of AIOU graced the panel discussion.

The discourse commenced with a warm welcome from Prof. Dr. Hajra Ahmad, acknowledging cities' influential role in global development and emphasizing the shared responsibility in nurturing cities as inclusive, sustainable hubs. She underscored the significance of this year's theme as a reminder to collectively build cities that prioritize the well-being of all inhabitants.

A video message from Executive Director Maimoona Mohd. Sharif emphasized the necessity for a new financing framework to facilitate sustainable urban development, stressing the importance of integrated planning and prioritizing shelter and housing as fundamental human rights.

Mr. Najam Jamy's presentation delved into "How can cities contribute to Pakistan's Economy," highlighting the value cities add while addressing impediments imposed by government regulations hindering their growth. He pointed out institutional fragmentation, inadequate infrastructure, vertical programs, and weak financial sustainability as barriers to cities' potential as engines of growth.

Mr. Jawed Ali Khan shed light on the "Challenges and Opportunities for financing sustainable urban future for all," emphasizing the need for inclusive urban development. He highlighted that Karachi generates 55% of the country's revenue, underscoring cities' substantial economic contributions. He stressed the urgency of investing in cities for mutual benefits, advocating for financial decentralization and empowering municipal financing to set examples for government programs. He proposed academic institutions like AIOU to introduce courses aimed at engaging youth for economic advancement and offered UN-Habitat's support in organizing discussions focused on strengthening urban and rural economies.

Prof. Dr. Irshad Ahmad Arshad expressed gratitude, spotlighting AIOU's role in sustainable development through research and teaching, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 4, 8, and 17. He highlighted the university's commendable rankings in these SDGs, showcasing its dedication towards impactful sustainability initiatives.

Dr. Muhammad Latif Gondal, in closing remarks, urged acknowledging political constraints and moving ahead with climate-smart initiatives. He emphasized collaboration with communities and academia to ensure research and initiatives resonate with the country's needs, aiding its development.