

# Media Update

31 October 2023

## UNITED NATIONS

SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE

### THE SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE FOR WORLD CITIES DAY

31 October 2023

World Cities Day is a time to consider the pivotal role cities play in sustainable development.

Cities are engines of economic growth and innovation that hold the key to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. They are also on the frontlines of today's complex challenges, from the climate crisis to growing inequalities and political polarization.

But local authorities are struggling with limited support and resources, while demand for infrastructure, affordable housing, efficient transport, and social services is immense and growing. This year's theme, Financing Sustainable Urban Development, is a call to action.

Governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society, must work together to mobilize finance for resilient, sustainable cities. I am a strong advocate for equitable financing solutions at the global level. These must be used, together with innovative and diverse funding sources, to strengthen local financing strategies that are climate-friendly, inclusive and equitable.

The Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments I established recently will strengthen coordination to implement the SDGs, and make sure the voices of cities and regions are heard as we prepare for the Summit of the Future next year.

As we mark World Cities Day, let's resolve to work together for urban areas that are not only engines of growth, but beacons of sustainability, resilience, and prosperity for all.

\*\*\*

## ILO

PRESS RELEASE

### Stakeholders validate evaluation of ILO interventions to promote decent work for vulnerable segments of society

***Participants in the validation event heard testimonials from stakeholders how the project has brought change in their lives.***

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (ILO News) – The International Labour Organization (ILO) convened a stakeholders workshop to validate the evaluation of the project “Promotion of Decent Work Opportunities for the Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable Segments of Society project”. The project has been implemented in Punjab, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces since 2019. Participants heard that the project has significantly improved the lives of vulnerable populations. One of its key achievements was the support provided for the development of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Social Protection Policy in 2022. This policy was designed to enhance the quality and adequacy of social protection coverage, ultimately fostering a more secure and equitable environment for vulnerable populations.

Hosted at the ILO in Islamabad, the event brought together representatives from the Government, employers' and workers' organizations, and development partners.

Funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), the project played a pivotal role in enabling the registration of the first-ever trade union in Balochistan's brick kiln sector, empowering workers by establishing a vital platform for collective bargaining to address labor-related concerns.

Through the project, the ILO has been able to actively support the Government of Pakistan's commitment to environmental conservation and reduced carbon emissions. The adoption of the so-called zig-zag technique not only improved occupational safety and health for brick kiln workers but also, notably, enhanced their productivity.

"ILO is thankful to the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation for their generous support and also recognizes the dedication of constituents and partners in promoting the cause of decent work," said Geir Tostol, Director of ILO's Country Office for Pakistan.

He further said that this project has seen a remarkable journey, advocating for decent work opportunities, especially within the challenging sector of brick kilns, which is home to some of the most vulnerable segments of our society. "The project addressed rampant decent work deficits by promoting social protection, environmental sustainability, and crucially, by engaging with public entities to enhance dialogue on issues of investment, skills, and job creation," he added.

Francesco Zatta, Country Director of AICS, welcomed the contribution of the more environmentally friendly technology promoted in brick kilns. "AICS strongly supports Pakistan in ensuring environmental protection and mitigating the effects of climate change. The project's component of providing an effective one-window operation for social protection is also praiseworthy, especially in documenting workers and their family members and allowing them to benefit from social protection schemes," he added.

Speaking at the occasion, Azhar Iqbal Malik, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development noted that the Ministry was committed to promoting decent work and economic empowerment as a means to enhancing the well-being and livelihoods of vulnerable segments of society. "We understand that when people have access to quality jobs, they not only experience improved living standards but also enjoy enhanced dignity and self-respect," he added.

**For further information please contact:**

**Muhammad Numan**

**Communication Officer**

Email: [numan@ilo.org](mailto:numan@ilo.org)

Mobile: +92 303 5000041

## UNDP

PRESS RELEASE

### U.S., UNDP & KP Unite to Boost SME Financial Access in KP's Merged Areas

*Islamabad, October 31, 2023* – The United States Government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Development Programme, and the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa jointly launched a strategy on improving access to finance for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's merged areas. Stakeholders from the banking sector, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) and the KP Chambers of Commerce also participated and exchanged ideas.

"SMEs represent the driving force of global economies, and Pakistan is no exception with 90% of its workforce employed by SMEs, contributing 40% to the national GDP," said USAID Mission Director Kate Somvongsiri. "We all know how crucial access to credit is. It's the key for businesses to grow and thrive."

Neelum Sultana Khattak, Additional Secretary Finance said, "Out-of-the box action-oriented thinking is the need of the day to effectively cope with the challenges. The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has to open itself for greater partnership with the private sector." He emphasized that the strategy would help the private sector grow through result-focused interventions.

Ms. Van Nguyen, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative highlighted, "The development of this strategy is a great effort at sub-national level to mainstream financial inclusion for SMEs in greater harmony and synchronized with national level efforts." She stated that the strategy reflects the greater commitment of the Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (GoKP) towards a multi-pronged approach for the sustained economic growth.

SMEs need improved access to credit as one of the prerequisites to their growth, whereby historically, only 1.2 percent of national credit has reached KP. Through the newly developed strategy, the public and private sectors will use modern technology to open new ways for small businesses to get access to finance.

**For additional information, please contact Shuja Hakim at [shuja.hakim@undp.org](mailto:shuja.hakim@undp.org) or +92 (51) 835 5657**

### ### ###

*UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations to build integrated, lasting solutions for people and planet. Learn more at [undp.org](http://undp.org) or follow at @UNDP*