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TOWARDS A RESILIENT PAKISTAN

Policy Reforms for Governance, Economy, and Youth Empowerment

Policy Brief

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Introduction

The Iftaar e Ikhtyaar 2025: Uniting for Pakistan conference, held at the Lahore Conservation Society and organized by Quantumverse Laboratory (Q-Lab), Carbo-X (Private) Limited, and the Lahore Conservation Society, was a landmark event dedicated to discussing key challenges and opportunities for Pakistan's future. The event was organized in commemoration of Pakistan Resolution Day (March 23), a day that symbolizes the country's commitment to self-determination, progress, and national unity. Bringing together experts, policymakers, and advocates, the event aimed to address pressing issues in governance, economic stability, youth empowerment, environmental conservation, and media accountability.

Throughout the discussions, speakers highlighted systemic flaws in policymaking, inefficient resource allocation, and the lack of inclusive development frameworks. The conference emphasized that just as the Pakistan Resolution of 1940 laid the foundation for the country's independence, a new vision for governance and policy reforms is needed today to ensure sustainable development and prosperity. This policy brief synthesizes the key insights from the conference and presents actionable recommendations for policymakers, industry leaders, and civil society organizations.



Key Issues and Policy Recommendations

Youth Empowerment and Economic Inclusion

One of the most pressing concerns raised during the conference was the lack of economic opportunities for the youth, which has led to high unemployment rates and increasing migration trends. Many young professionals are leaving Pakistan due to limited career prospects, while those who remain struggle to find meaningful employment due to skill mismatches in the job market. Moreover, the commercialization of education was criticized for prioritizing financial gains over the development of practical and technical skills, leaving graduates unprepared for the demands of modern industries.

To address these issues, the government must establish youth entrepreneurship programs that provide financial and technical support to startups. Access to seed funding, business incubators, and mentorship programs should be expanded to enable young entrepreneurs to launch innovative businesses. Additionally, education reform is essential to equip students with relevant skills for the labor market. Universities and technical institutes must collaborate with industries to design curricula that emphasize critical thinking, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship. Moreover, to curb brain drain, the government should introduce incentive structures such as tax breaks and business grants to retain talent within Pakistan.

Governance and Policy Transparency

The discussions at the conference also highlighted inefficiencies in governance, with experts pointing to bureaucratic red tape, lack of transparency in government spending, and mismanagement of public funds. A significant portion of national funds is allocated to politically motivated infrastructure projects rather than essential sectors such as education, healthcare, and environmental conservation. This misallocation hinders long-term development and exacerbates socio-economic inequalities.

To improve governance, policymakers must prioritize performance-based budget allocations that ensure public funds are directed toward high-impact projects. Additionally, data-driven policymaking should be implemented to track progress and measure the effectiveness of government initiatives. Transparency can also be enhanced by making public spending data accessible to citizens, allowing for greater accountability. Furthermore, inclusive governance structures must be established to ensure women, youth, and marginalized communities are adequately represented in decision-making processes.

Economic Stability and Debt Management

Pakistan's economic policies have long been criticized for their short-term focus and reliance on foreign debt. The country's debt-driven growth strategy has led to unsustainable borrowing, increasing fiscal pressure and limiting economic sovereignty. The conference discussions underscored the need for a shift from debt dependency to a production-based economic model, where local industries are strengthened, and exports are prioritized.

To achieve sustainable economic growth, the government must adopt long-term investment strategies that prioritize industrial development and infrastructure improvement. Support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is critical, as they contribute significantly to employment and economic diversification. Regulatory reforms should be introduced to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and create a more business-friendly environment. Moreover, a national strategy should be devised to increase domestic production, reduce reliance on imports, and strengthen trade partnerships that foster economic resilience.

Environmental Conservation and Sustainable Development

Environmental degradation remains a significant challenge for Pakistan, with industrial pollution, weak enforcement of environmental laws, and unsustainable urbanization contributing to the country's ecological crisis. The Lahore Conservation Society emphasized the need for stronger environmental protection policies and improved urban conservation efforts. Speakers also raised concerns about high carbon emissions, deforestation, and inefficient waste management systems that further exacerbate climate-related challenges.

To mitigate environmental risks, the government must implement stricter regulations on industrial emissions and enforce penalties on violators. Additionally, incentives should be introduced for businesses that adopt sustainable practices, such as renewable energy integration and waste recycling initiatives. Conservation efforts must also extend to urban areas, where historical and ecological preservation is often overlooked. Collaboration between public and private stakeholders is essential to ensure that environmental policies are effectively implemented and upheld.

Media Freedom and Responsible Journalism

The role of the media in shaping public opinion and influencing governance was a key topic of discussion at the conference. Experts criticized the lack of journalistic integrity, biased reporting, and media ownership conflicts that often result in selective issue coverage. It was highlighted that corporate and political interests frequently dictate news narratives, suppressing critical issues such as human rights violations and corruption. Additionally, the rise of misinformation and fake news on social media poses a serious threat to public discourse and democratic processes.

To promote responsible journalism, it is essential to establish media ethics and accountability frameworks that ensure unbiased and fact-based reporting. Independent media watchdogs should be empowered to monitor journalistic practices and hold news organizations accountable. Furthermore, fact-checking initiatives should be expanded to combat misinformation on digital platforms. The government must also safeguard press freedom while preventing undue influence from political and corporate entities, ensuring that the media serves as an impartial pillar of democracy.



Conclusion and Call to Action

The Iftaar e Ikhtyaar 2025 conference, organized to mark Pakistan Resolution Day, underscored the urgent need for policy reforms in governance, economic planning, youth empowerment, and environmental sustainability. The discussions highlighted systemic inefficiencies but also emphasized the potential for transformative change if the right policies are implemented.

Just as the Pakistan Resolution of 1940 laid the foundation for the country's independence, today's leaders must commit to a new vision that ensures transparency, sustainability, and inclusivity in governance. To build a more progressive, self-reliant, and economically stable Pakistan, policymakers, industry leaders, and civil society organizations must collaborate to enact meaningful reforms. There is an urgent need to shift from reactive, short-term policymaking to proactive, evidence-based governance strategies that ensure sustainable progress.

Moving forward, it is essential to engage in continuous dialogue, monitor policy implementation, and adapt strategies to meet evolving national challenges. By prioritizing youth empowerment, economic resilience, environmental responsibility, and media integrity, Pakistan can forge a path toward long-term stability and prosperity. The recommendations outlined in this brief serve as a roadmap for a stronger, more unified Pakistan, in line with the vision set forth in March 1940.



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