

Forum of Ministers of Social Development from Asia

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Reform Initiatives for Social Development in Pakistan

Speaker: H E Mr. Daniyal Aziz, Chairman NRB

Honorable delegates from Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Mali, Mr. Pierre Sane' Assistant Director General UNESCO, Excellencies, the Honorable Chief Justice of the Balochistan High Court, representatives of the Public Accounts Committees, the Accountant Generals, the Auditor General's office as well as the Service Tribunal and the Anti Corruption Departments, Ombudsmen and the Inspection Commissions of the provincial and the federal Governments, the Honorable representative of the UNDP and Mr. Fredrick B., Director for Asian Development Bank, General Tanwir Hussain Naqvi, ladies and gentlemen, Assalam-o-Alaikum.

Today is a very important day in the history of Public Accountability in Pakistan as well as in the region. The reason is that in this conference for the first time, what Pakistan is doing with the help of UNESCO and UNDP in setting a stage for Asia to bring together all of the various institutions, bodies, organizations which are linked in some way or the other to Public Accountability function. I think that we never had this kind of auspicious occasion in which, Honorable members of the organizations that I have mentioned, gathered together in one group to look at the holistic view of the Public Accountability interdependent relationship between the various organizations and their functionality as well as to suggest various kinds of weaknesses or improvements that we may be able to surmount through this process. While that is a great beginning for Pakistan, I am very pleased that we are able to become the catalyst for other countries in Asia to be able to also begin this process and I think the important thing to recognize today is that this conference signals the beginning of a long term and medium term process that we will be able to start putting together through relationship of understanding, the research through which our countries, and specially for my part, Pakistan will be able to start looking at Public Accountability within the overall context of Governance as a holistic process that require holistic approach for improvement. So I think, it is important to mention some of the background of the context. In Argentina over the past three years where meetings have been taking place involving the Social Development Ministers, I, as the representative from Pakistan have been representing Asia in those meetings and finally now we have the opportunity through this conference to establish the Asian Network of Social Development Ministers and because Pakistan has through the past five or six years become a really front runner in the region in terms of being able to reform itself internally with a whole new homegrown approach to recreating and restructuring, reconstructing the system of the State.

It is a great honor for me to be able to dedicate this particular network to Public Accountability, which as you all know, is a very burning issue in Africa as well as in Latin America as well as in the Asia. But I think that while the issues are important and the networks are important, the most important aspect of these meetings and the interrelationship that we will develop over the next few years is that this south-south dialogue between countries who are experiencing similar different kinds of deficits in terms of governance to be able to come together and have their own experiences sharing and have their own solutions to be able to begin long, tumultuous and twilling path of creating structures and systems in their countries that can serve the purposes for the development of their people.

I am much honored and especially happy that the UN system as well as the Asian Development Bank and other international participants here are very cautiously and very consciously ensuring that enough support, enough precedence is given to these kinds of initiatives so that Pakistan as well as the regional countries can begin developing these platforms. One of the things which is very important, I think to state here today is that governance is probably the most misunderstood term that exists within the overall structure of public administration. Almost to every organization, governance has a different meaning. If you talk to Transparency International their interpretation of governance is anti-corruption, if you talk to World Bank, they have various interpretation of governance- probably every thing on-going in Pakistan need to go before Central Board of Revenue. For all purposes at the National Reconstruction Bureau, we view governance as reconstructing the relationship between citizens and the state which is probably a much more holistic and much wider scope and explanation which includes political culture and things like Public Accountability being discussed in this conference.

So when we look at the international initiatives, our people are looking forward with a lot hope and a lot of expectation for improvement that our governments are being geared up to be able to provide for. Like for example, the Millennium Development Goals. There is a long list of what the achievements that are expected by 2015 or 2020 in different years under the Millennium Development Goals. But in terms of providing the governance environment, the political culture, the administrative renaissance, the technical capacity, the human resource, for being able to achieve those goals, these are not all of material understanding or expression that you can find that is going to be able to provide the work forces that can deliver the kinds of targets which are in the Millennium Development Goals. This is increasingly becoming a reality and some thing that has been understood by the international community. And I think that one of the purposes of this particular conference and this network and indeed the other networks who assisted Asian Network of Social Development Ministers. We want to use this opportunity of the Asian platform to highlight this particular aspect of achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and we want to also bring to the notice of international community what a massive deficit is there from what the kinds of expectations which are being created by stating the Millennium Development Goals in terms of reduction of poverty, education or health and so on and so forth and the human resource capacity, the institutional renaissance , the political culture, the Public Accountability mechanisms, the budgeting system, the taxation structure, all of this is needed to be able to be garnered and to be able to provide for the kinds of results that we are looking for. So as we move on in the network, and the next meetings in the next host countries takes place, we want to continue to expand this round and to bring in to the dialogue the aspects of citizen-state relation and citizen-institutional mechanism and state-institutional structures, so that the huge governance deficit that we have been facing, can also be something that the international community not only recognizes but also has a very forward looking and a very progressive and very bold intervention matrix that cannot be side-stepped or looked away from at the alter of or at the expense of relationship with various levels of bureaucracy or country offices that you know go through to push so far. This aspect of reform is not only needed in the Asia but also in other developing countries of the world. It must be non negotiable. Simply giving waivers and other kinds of actions which had taken place in the past that Pakistan has witnessed under social action program and other kinds of mechanism, when targets were not met, and various kinds of political pressures, and other kinds of macro balance structures come in the way, and the waivers were given in order to ensure that certain kind of moneys were approved to keep internal-external balance. In the process what happen is that the contents of the reforms gets diluted, it gets compromised and often times it gets derailed and is dispensed with .

So for this purpose it is critically important that all countries are able to develop internally an ever increasing body of politicians, of journalists, of business people of various sectors, and the civil societies, the NGOs, the others to be able to have an internal momentum that does not allow and that can provide the vigilance functions that when at the alter of various kinds of expediencies demanded by micro stability issues, governance contents or reform contents being mitigated or being diluted that there is a reaction to that and not simply to look at it from the perspective of international-institutional-country relations, but also be able to have the research capabilities and the broad networking capabilities to be able to come up with solutions that are widely researched that can be presented as our alternatives as to how we feel that our country should be progressing and what our exigencies, our difficulties, our understandings, our cultural requirements as well as imperatives are and in that way not only we will be able to meet with the international standards in an ever increasing fashion but to do it in a way that allows for our political culture development and our citizen-state relation development in a way that future generations of our country can be proud.

Ladies and Gentlemen this is no easy task. We suffer from a colonial administrative hangover, that conditioning of over 150 years is something which to this day determines political culture and determines citizen-state relations. Pakistan has taken very bold step in 2001 and dismantled the colonial structures of the administration and introduced an effective democratic system at the local level. And this is something which is unparalleled in any other erstwhile British colonial state. We have removed the structures of the colonial administrative controls against which our independence movement was successful and our folks created this great country. Our process may have come late but it is better to be late than never. This is a huge time requirement in terms of settling these issues. The entire cultural paradigm of how this citizen-state relation goes right down to moral behavior and political party culture as well as interaction between the assemblies and the bureaucracy, the judiciary, the executives and the accountability institutions, all of that is under a massive structural change. Many people can see that at the local level and many people can not. But this friction, I can tell you as a politician that every house I visited for condolences or to attend a wedding, the common talk there was about the governance. That was not the case seven years ago. This contesting and this debating is the only process through which a new governance paradigm can be established or entrenched. So, for the purposes of this experience, it is also very important not only to look at the historical development of the political culture which was under the very sought of subservient auspicious of the provincial and federal level at the times of the British colonial rule under which the political system as a whole was an appendage to a very insulated hierarchal administrative structure and actually it was the politics of the administration itself internally which was much more dominant than the politics of the public, an electoral politics. And that tradition continues to this day. I have been reading from different countries, the experience of the Public Account Committees. I was surprised to see that in those countries which have been sort of played by fits and start of democracy and those countries which have relatively stable democracies, often times it is a recurring theme that the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committees on various kinds of inquiries or various kinds of recoveries or various kinds of sanctions or administrative measures are not acted upon. In studying these processes we looked at different historical development of these Public Accounts Committees and researched that. The international accounts organization has also one of the website where you can find a lot of that information. It is interesting to see that how over time, the public and the administrative interface was something that was sort of a hand out that increased so much time in order to buy some more stability by providing a little bit for more accountability sort of control and actions. And so far to this day, design of the relationship between Public Accounts Committees and the structures of the state or the official bureaucracy is very insulate.

I can show you many of the recommendations by the accounts committees in Pakistan, which have not been acted upon. So these are the linkages through which the more severe measures that are demanded and public is making statements like, a person like Khomini is needed who can kill 5000 people, and different kinds of Ehtesab Bureau are coming in, National Accountability Bureau and anticorruption partners and so on and so forth. But basically the front end, the main state of Public Accountability mechanism in any developed society is those people who are making the budget they are responsible for the execution of that budget and for that purpose the Auditor General's office and the Accountant General office are the structures which are providing the information to that public representative body to be able to take action and control various kinds of mismanagement or mal-administration or indeed even corruption. So this is a very big question, this is history and the current functionality that we have and this is across the board. It is not something that is only a Pakistan's specific problem. This is something that we need to look at as a society and the interrelation on the jurisdictional mandate between the Ombudsman offices between the Auditor General's office between the Anti Corruption Department, the Inspection Commissions, the National Accountability Bureau and the internal officials of the administration.

For the purposes of this conference as a starting point, we have sent some proformas to the Honorable international delegates, to try and be able to create some kind of comparability. It is my hope and prayer that during the course of the presentations from each country, we will begin to hear, perhaps a little bit in the first round, to look at their respective countries as they will be able to tell us what kinds of reforms initiatives are ongoing in their countries as well as they will be able to hear from the Pakistani delegates from various levels of the Government and the various institutions of our organizations as to what kinds of difficulties they are facing, what kinds of reforms initiative are under way and how we have budded the current state in dealing with these kinds of issues. From this starting point, we can then continue to collaborate and work on all those issues. So essentially, this is the background and the introduction to this conference. This is a very difficult and uphill task, as Governance reforms are and Governance initiatives are in general and something that we cannot take encyclopedia out of shop and look at page 34 and go through the problem and how to manage it. So this is something that we are going to learn together that we will have to take up together and work on together. For that purpose I think this is a very good starting point and with those words, I welcome all of you and look forward to your contributions in the conference.

Thank you very much.