

Policy Brief / Recommendations

CPEC-A STEP TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES (SEZs) BY

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A roundtable conference was hosted by Urban Development Division of Centre of Excellence - China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CoE-CPEC) with the title of “CPEC-A Step Towards Environmentally Sustainable Special Economic Zones (SEZs)”, organized by Dr. Saleem Janjua, Head of Policy and his team members on May 25th, 2017. Some of the distinguished guests were as under:

- ❖ Dr. Shahid Rashid (Executive Director, CoE-CPEC)
- ❖ Dr. Saleem Janjua (Head of Policy, Urban Development Division, CoE-CPEC)
- ❖ Ms. Fauzia Bilqis Malik (Manager Islamabad Programme Office, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Pakistan)
- ❖ Prof. Syed Ahmad Ali Shah (Director CESTaC, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi)
- ❖ Dr. Uzaira Rafique (Professor, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi).

The roundtable conference concluded with a discussion among speakers and participants. The purpose was to design policy and put forward recommendations, so that SEZs are made green. Following important recommendations were made.

- Climate Change and environmental assessment in the form of some SEA (Strategic Environment Analysis) for all 9 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) should be carried out.
- There is need to ensure that the infrastructure developed under CPEC projects is climate resilient.
- A series of awareness raising and capacity building events on environment and climate change issues and their solutions for CPEC need to be conducted in areas/cities where all 9 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are proposed by taking all relevant stakeholders on board.

- Trainings on topics such as; Clean Development Mechanism, Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions and Green Climate Fund are needed for relevant stakeholders to tap additional source of revenue for the industry under CPEC SEZs.
- Biodiversity and ecotourism should be considered during project planning and implementation
- Sustainable development can only be ensured when environmental and social externalities are accounted for.
- All SEZs should be assessed properly by carrying out detailed feasibility reports.
- Environmental laws differ from province to province. Similarly, the nine SEZs are spread across provinces, so at this stage the environmental regulatory and legislative structure for SEZs among the provinces should be harmonized.
- All environmental laws are part of SEZs development so all relevant authorities should be included during the SEA process. SEA gives a cumulative picture.
- Feasibility analysis for SEZs should be done. Each zone should have its specialization clearly demarcated. Also all SEZs should be connected to near urban centers, so that SEZs can be sustainable, since they cannot thrive in isolation.

From December 2016, SEZs are in focus, and are now a provincial subject. The plan for them is now being unfolded, and based on local endowment, industry specific to each location are being assessed. The need of the hour is to plan and design special economic zones that are environment friendly so that the long run sustainability is ensured. Environment should remain a top concern while development, since prevention is always better than cure. This is the right time to put up proposals to turn SEZs into green SEZs, and CPEC a green project.