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Depletion of natural resources linked to poverty

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“There was a time when our deltaic and coastal areas were very rich in natural resources and the people were prosperous, but due to the deterioration of the natural resources, people have become poor,” said Dr Sikandar Mandro, member Sindh Assembly.

Mandro was speaking at the launching ceremony of a small grants scheme Partnership Fund Programme, and the GIS-based web portal Decision Support System that has been initiated by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Pakistan’s Indus for All Programme.

Speaking at the occasion, Dr Sikandar Mandro elaborated his role in the establishment of the Sindh Coastal Development Authority in 1994. He regretted the fact that the Authority has not been able to deliver as per its mandate. As a result, the situation in coastal areas has deteriorated and plantation and other initiatives to improve forests and natural vegetation failed due to negligence. Mandro emphasised the need to promote alternate sources of livelihood to encourage conservation of natural resources.

The Sindh Planning and Development Department Secretary Mohammad Ali Khaskheli said that Sindh is facing numerous environmental and developmental challenges and thus needs a holistic approach to address growing challenges. Within Sindh there was immense scope of development work that had yet to be undertaken. He appreciated the WWF-Pakistan for funding 11 projects across the province that are meant to improve the environment and promote conservation of biodiversity. He hoped that the initiatives would be implemented with due sincerity and dedication by recipients of the grant.

The Director of the Indus for All Programme Dr Ghulam Akbar explained that the Indus for All Programme is a five-year conservation and livelihood programme by initiated by WWF-Pakistan, which will utilize Partnership Fund and Decision Support System as its two main components. The programme is currently being implemented in four sites, Keti Bunder and Keenjhar Lake in Thatta, Pai Forest in Nawabshah and Chotiari Wetlands Complex in Sanghar district.

Programme Coordinator Nasir Ali Panhwar said that the thematic areas of the Partnership Fund are conservation of natural resources and ecological processes as well as provision of livelihood support. The Partnership Fund would allow partners from the government, academic institutions, NGO sectors and community based organisations to implement projects within the Indus Ecoregion with the assistance of the Programme’s fund scheme. The projects will be implemented in six districts of the Province including Khairpur, Thatta, Badin, Nawabshah, Dadu and Matiari.

Cheques were handed over to the representatives of the partner organisations whose project proposals have been approved. In total, 11 project proposals have been granted funding under the Partnership Fund. Moreover, the Decision Support System web portal was also launched at the occasion.