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### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **National Symposium on “Alarming Population Growth in Pakistan: Call for action”**

A three members Bench headed by the Hon’ble Mr. Justice Mian Saqib Nisar, Chief Justice of Pakistan in Human Rights Case No.17599/2018 directed the constitution a Task Force to formulate a mechanism to curb population growth in the country. Resultantly, the Task Force gave eight point recommendations specifying clear priorities, roles, responsibilities and timeline for action. The Hon’ble Supreme Court endorsed the recommendations and directed that the same be placed before the Council of Common Interest (CCI) and the CCI was pleased to approve all the recommendations in its meeting dated 19-11-2018.

The Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJCP) in collaboration with the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination (NHSR&C), Government of Pakistan organized a National Symposium on **Alarming Population Growth in Pakistan: Call for Action** on December 5, 2018.

In the recent past, the LJCP under the Chairmanship of Hon’ble Chief Justice of Pakistan conducted a two-day international symposium under the theme of **“Creating a water-secure Pakistan”** as well as holding the **8<sup>th</sup> Judicial Conference** in which researchers and scholars around the world deliberated upon the theme and gave useful recommendations. The LJCP has forwarded more than 130 law reform reports to the federal government containing proposals for amendments in various laws. The LJCP is also continuously assisting the Supreme Court of Pakistan in matters of public importance like uniform education policy, illegal funding to NGOs, Katchi Abadi case, Probation and Parole, construction of Islamabad Model Jail and sufferings of prisoners, illegal transplant of human organs, fire at Margalla hills, identity to transgenders and Aids victims, Uniform Police Reform Laws, etc.

**The first session of today’s symposium** was held in Federal Judicial Academy (FJA) Islamabad which was chaired by Capt. (Rtd) Zahid Saeed, Secretary Ministry of NHSR&C who gave a brief overview of the Population increase in Pakistan which grew at the rate of 2.4% during the period 1998-2017 and is projected to reach 285 million by 2030. He also informed that the fertility rate of women in Pakistan is higher than that of other countries in the region. He further stated that with the alarming increase in population resources like water and food etc are shrinking and in fact this issue requires immediate attention. He stressed that awareness regarding alarming increase in population should be spread through media and other means.

Dr. Zeba A. Sathar, Country Director, Population Council, Pakistan gave key note address in which she stated that with the population of 208 Million, Pakistan is the 6<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world with the growth rate of 2.4% which is highest in the region. She also stated that Pakistan has the lowest contraceptive rate of 34% as compared to other Asian countries mainly due to lack of information, limited access options and negative experience of side effects of contraceptives. She also informed that out of estimated 9 Million pregnancies per year in Pakistan around 4 Million are

unwanted. She said that if Pakistan had followed Population planning models of Bangladesh or Indonesia then the overall population of Pakistan could have been under control. She stated that with the fertility decline the per capita income would increase. She recommended that strong policy reforms are required for meeting the challenge of alarming population growth and education emergency is needed to ensure universal primary education for both boys and girls by 2030.

Various experts, renowned scholars and Ulema also deliberated upon the symposium theme and emphasized upon the challenge and opportunities viz-a-viz population dynamics in Pakistan. They also discussed the role of the international community in supporting Pakistan's population program, Global Progress and Prospects for Pakistan and Islamic Perspective on Birth Spacing.

**The evening session of the symposium** was held in the Supreme Court of Pakistan Auditorium Islamabad and was chaired by Hon'ble Mr. Justice Mian Saqib Nisar, Chief Justice of Pakistan. The Chief Guest of the session was the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Islamic Republic of Pakistan Mr. Imran Khan and was also attended by Hon'ble Judges of the Superior Courts, the Acting Speaker National Assembly, Federal Ministers, Prime Minister of AJK, Chief Ministers of Sindh and Gilgit-Baltistan, Provincial Ministers, Members of Parliament, Ambassadors and High Commissioners, Members of Legal Fraternity, Academia, Ulema, Representatives of INGOs/NGOs, International Development Partners, Media persons etc.

In opening remarks Capt. (Rtd) Zahid Saeed, Secretary Ministry of NHR&C stated that the ministry has held meetings with the chief ministers of the provinces and other stakeholders departments/ministries regarding implementation of the recommendations of the task force and all concerned have shown resolve for implementing the same. He further stated that the implementation of the recommendations of the task force would be possible with the inclusion and ownership of all the concerned.

Dr. John Bongaarts, Vice President and distinguished Scholar, Population Council, New York, USA presented the new demographic realities of Pakistan and described that population of Pakistan will be approximately 352 million by 2100. He also informed that population size ratio of Pakistan is higher than India and Bangladesh. Furthermore, there is less contraceptive use in Pakistan as compared to the aforesaid two countries. He recommended that the multi-sectoral benefits of family planning and slower population growth may be recognized. Moreover, family planning programs may be given a development priority and increased investment should be made in family planning programs.

Dr. Sania Nishtar, Chairperson, Benazir Income Support Program, Islamabad stated that the family planning program was earlier launched and carried out successfully in the 1960s. She also emphasized the use of modern capacities for promoting awareness of contraceptive use and that family welfare public facilities should be more functional for increasing their efficiency.

Syed Babir Ali, Founder of Packages Limited, Nestle Pakistan Limited and Lahore University of Management Sciences emphasized the use of print/electronic media and social media for advocacy campaign for effective implementation of family planning. Mr. Javed Jabbar, former, Federal Information Minister, Former Senator emphasized that national narrative for family planning may be built by emphasizing credibility, unanimity, singularity, consistency and reality in the message of tackling alarming population growth. He also emphasized that the prime time of TV talk shows may also be utilized for creating awareness among the masses regarding alarming population growth.

The religious scholar Maulana Tariq Jameel expressed concern over the social taboos linked with population growth factors and emphasized on the promotion of education and creating awareness among the general public to understand the ethics and dignity of human creation in order to maintain a balance for better quality of life of the future generations. He also highlighted the characteristics of a welfare state in the light of Quran and Hadith.

The Hon'ble Chief Justice of Pakistan stated that Pakistan's population will be approximately doubled in the next 30 years and by that time our water and food resources would be severally depleted and immediate steps require to be taken to tackle the issue of alarming growth in population.

The Hon'ble Chief Justice of Pakistan also stated that the Supreme Court of Pakistan has taken up various issues that are vital to general public such as construction of dams, health and education issues and the present government should take a lead in tackling these issues in order to create a welfare state.

He further stated that as per directions in Human Rights Case No. 17599/18 a task force was formed which prepared a set of eight key recommendations to accelerate government efforts to reduce the population growth rate, lower the total fertility rate, and increase the contraceptive prevalence rate and it is now the prerogative of the government to implement the recommendations of the task force. He further stated that the population growth rate in Pakistan has reached devastating proportion and in the near future the position will worsen to such an extent that there would be no resources to cater to the needs of a very large population. He further emphasized that if the recommendations of the task force are not implemented then the nation would fail in tackling the issue of alarming population growth in the country. He said that the judiciary is ready to work alongside the executive and resolving the issues facing the nations.

The Hon'ble Chief Justice of Pakistan stressed that for strengthening the Rule of Law in the country the number of judges should be increased as they are overburdened with cases moreover the century old laws like the Code of Civil Procedure, Code of Criminal Procedure, Contract Act, Limitation Act etc. needs to be amended by the legislature as per present day requirements so that the general public may be able to get expeditious relief from the courts. He also emphasized on the use of alternate dispute resolution methods for quick disposal of cases and the imposition of costs for discouragement of false and frivolous litigation.

The Chief Guest, His Excellency the Prime Minister of Pakistan stated that the Hon'ble Supreme Court of Pakistan has initiated the process of Rule of Law in the country through recent landmark judgements and also taken up various important issues related to public importance. He further iterated that issues like construction of dams and alarming population growth were not considered previously by the governments as the main focus was on short term targets within the life span of the governments. He further said that the Federal Government on the directions of the Supreme Court formed a task force and whose recommendations have been approved by the Council of Common Interest and the Provincial Governments are on board to implement these recommendations. He further stressed that the religious scholars could play a vital role in creating awareness regarding tackling the issue of alarming population growth.

He stated that the issues of population growth and environment are interlinked as global warming also affects the climate having direct impact on the well being of population. He also stated that ten billion trees would be planted in the country in the next five years for betterment of the environment. Moreover, he also emphasized the need to include the subject of environment and population planning in school curriculum.

The Prime Minister also informed that his government has planned to amend the major legislations in the country to update the judicial system and have also prepared new laws for relief of general public.

This press release can be downloaded from the website of Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan ([www.ljcp.gov.pk](http://www.ljcp.gov.pk)).

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