

# FULFILLING ENVIRONMENT RELATED INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS (MEAS) IN PAKISTAN

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## ABSTRACT

*Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) help address the environmental problems being faced by the international community as a whole. The ultimate goal of reaching MEAs is to realize sustainable development across the globe. According to World Bank (2006), Pakistan's economy loses Rs. 365 billion annually to environmental hazards. A key mechanism available under international law for countries to work together on global environmental issues is through MEAs. Pakistan is signatory to several MEAs and has acceded to other non-legally binding instruments, such as Agenda-21, Rio Principles and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation aiming at sustainable development of natural resources. As a party to various Conventions and Protocols, Pakistan has been participating in different Conferences of Parties (COPs), Meetings of Parties (MOPs), and international consultative and technical meetings regarding MEAs organized by the United Nations and other international fora. Pakistan has been actively participating in and keeping liaison with institutional elements of each of these MEAs, i.e. COPs, the secretariat, advisory bodies, subsidiary bodies, clearing-house mechanisms, for effective decision-making regarding the overall implementation and development of programme of work and strategic plans, budget and the revision of annexes to the treaties. Priorities and objectives of MEAs vary significantly from one international instrument to another while the common aspects include the sustainable development and use of natural resources and the protection of the environment in such a way as to ensure its judicious use. Based on different stages of implementation of these MEAs, the spectrum in priorities of Pakistan has been quite broad. Pakistan attaches greater emphasis to crosscutting themes for MEAs that are primarily of a functional nature, such as strengthening of the capacities to meet the country's obligations or responsibilities under these agreements; enhancing coordination among implementing agencies; public education and awareness; strengthening scientific basis for decision-making; and strengthening international partnerships.*

**Keywords:** *Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), Conference of Parties (CoPs), Meeting of Parties (MoPs), Environment Hazards, Sustainable Development, Environmental Governance.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Environment related challenges and issues of Pakistan are associated primarily with an imbalanced social and economic development in the recent decades. This challenge is further compounded with rapid urbanization due to a shift of population from rural to urban areas. Environmental problems are no longer defined as discrete problems, but are increasingly being understood as symptoms of disorder associated with a particular development path [1]. Climate change is really a problem of the ecological burden of human activity [2]. Environmental degradation is considered fundamentally linked to poverty in Pakistan. Approximately one-fourth of the country's population, like that of most developing countries, is poor and directly dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods whether agriculture, hunting, forestry, or fisheries. Poverty combined with a rapidly increasing population and growing urbanization, is leading to intense pressures on the environment. This environment-poverty combination cannot be ignored if effective and practical solutions are to be taken to remedy environmental hazards. In Pakistan, the deterioration of environment continues to affect livelihoods and health, thus increasing the vulnerability of the poor to disasters and environment-related conflicts. The current cost of environmental degradation is considerably high. According to an assessment made by the World Bank [3], the cost of environmental neglect and degradation to Pakistan's economy amounted to Rs. 365 billion per year.

Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) address the environmental problems being faced by the international community as a whole. The MEAs vouch for common responsibility among nations for environmental protection. The ultimate goal for the MEAs is sustainable development across the globe. Most environmental problems have a transboundary nature and often a global scope, and they can only be addressed effectively through international co-operation. The main method available under international law for countries to work together on global environmental issues is to implement a multilateral environmental agreement (MEA). The importance of cooperation among countries to work together in an integrated manner through various conventions/protocols cannot be overemphasized.

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## Fulfilling Environment Related International Commitments through MEAS in Pakistan

This research study aims to investigate the degree of awareness about the environment related international commitments and effectiveness of the focal agencies regarding the execution of decisions on various MEAs as a solution to problems encountered by Pakistan in implementation of MEAs. Specific objectives of this study were to: (i) evaluate the coordination and cooperation between stakeholders for compliance to MEAs; and (ii) make recommendations for implementation of MEAs in Pakistan.

### 2. METHODOLOGY

The survey was carried out using participants' experience method, structured interviews and informal discussion technique. International experiences on information management in implementation of MEAs were investigated through a literature survey of various reports, record of the Ministry of Environment and secondary data. Primary data were collected from the focal points in the Ministry of Environment, stakeholders of MEAs (twenty five members), and another twenty from various workshops organized by the Ministry from 2007-2010. The functions, role and the institutional mechanism of

MEAs were analyzed in relation to their implementation problems identified by previous studies. Twenty potential stakeholders from the private sector and NGO sector were also selected for the survey. The private sector and NGO representatives were selected from the participants of workshops organized by the Ministry of Environment during 2007-2010. The respondents of the survey were asked questions regarding: i) Obligations of Pakistan under various international conventions/protocols and the purpose of MEAs ratification; ii) their opinion on the effectiveness of MEAs Secretariat, and iii) the problems faced by Pakistan in implementing MEAs according to their perception and suggestions. Interviews were carried out during two months period from January to February 2011. The interviewees were requested to make recommendations as a way forward to improve information management of MEAs in Pakistan.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Multilateral Environmental Agreements Ratified by Pakistan

Pakistan is signatory to several MEAs and has

**Table-1: List of International Environment Conventions/Protocols Signed and Ratified by Pakistan**

Sr. No.	Name of Convention	Date of Signing	Date of Ratification	Main Theme
1.	Ramsar Convention on Wetlands	1971	July 1976	Conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation.
2.	Convention of Migratory Species (CMS)	1971	Dec. 1987	Conservation and protection of terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species.
3.	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)	1973	April 1976	Cooperation among the signatory countries for protection of certain endangered species of wild animals and plants to prevent their over exploitation through international trade.
4.	Convention on the Law of Seas	Dec. 1982	Feb. 1997	Peaceful uses of the seas and oceans; the equitable and efficient utilization of its resources; the conservation of their living resources; and study, protection and preservation of the marine environment.
5.	Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer	Jan. 1989	Dec. 1992	Protecting Ozone layer for conserving environment for the present and future generations.
6.	Montreal Protocol on Ozone Layer Depleting Substances	Jan. 1989	Dec. 1992	Protecting human health and the environment by reducing the emissions of certain substances that deplete or change the Ozone layer.
7.	Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes	May 1992	July 1994	Controlled trans boundary movement of Hazardous Wastes.

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8.	Convention on Biological Diversity	June 1992	26 <sup>th</sup> July 1994	Conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources
9.	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification	15 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 1994	24 <sup>th</sup> Feb. 1997	To combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and /or desertification, supported by international cooperation and integrated approach for sustainable development in the affected areas.
10.	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)	June 1992	June 1994	Stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system
11.	Kyoto Protocol to UNFCCC	Dec. 1997	Jan. 2005	It covers: 1. Mitigation of climate change so as to reverse the pace of climate change. 2. Promote the carbon sequestration and carbon credits, i.e. Certified Emission Reduction (CER) trading.
12.	Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent (PIC) for certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides	Sept. 1999	July 2005	Promotes shared responsibility and cooperation among parties in the international trade of certain hazardous chemicals in order to protect human health and the environment from potential harm and to contribute to their environmental sound use.
13.	Cartagena Protocol on Bio-safety to the CBD	4 <sup>th</sup> Jun. 2001	May 2009	A Protocol to CBD that deals with the safe handling, storage and trans-boundary movement of the Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO).
14.	Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)	Dec. 2001	April 2008	Protecting human health and the environment from the harmful impacts of persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

acceded to other non-legally binding instruments, such as Agenda-21, Rio Principles and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation aiming at sustainable development of natural resources. A detailed list of the Conventions/Protocols related to environment signed and ratified by Pakistan is given in Table-1. In this way, Pakistan acknowledged that sustainable management of environmental resources required acceptance of relevant international treaties in the field of the environment and the concurrent development of effective legal, institutional, and regulatory frameworks.

A review of MEAs shows that more than 120 global conventions have relevance to the Asian countries. Many of these have attracted significant levels of ratification or accession by Asian States [4]. The record of acceptance of MEAs (as given in Table-1) are of particular significance to the Asian countries and reveals that majority of the countries in South Asia has ratified these.

### 3.2 Key Obligations of Various Conventions/ Protocols

Multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) are global treaties whose geographic scope varies widely. Obligations in an MEA are considered to be legally binding for the Parties to the international environmental instruments. A legal obligation is authoritative, prescriptive and binding under international law. As a treaty, an MEA creates binding international obligations between parties to it. All the parties to an MEA perform their obligations in good faith and no party may invoke the provisions of its own domestic law to justify its failure to comply with an obligation under MEA. A list of key obligations under various Conventions and Protocols ratified by Pakistan is given in Table-2.

In the Millennium Report, the Secretary-General of the United Nations highlighted, "Support for the rule of law would be enhanced if countries signed and ratified international treaties and conventions", but many countries are unable to engage effectively owing to

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**Table-2: Key Obligations of Various International Conventions/Protocols**

Sr. No.	Name of Conventions	Main Obligations
1.	Ramsar Convention on Wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Designate at least one Wetland to be included in the list of Ramsar sites when signing the convention.</li> <li>ii. Contracting Parties shall endeavor through management to increase waterfowl populations on appropriate wetlands.</li> <li>iii. Contracting Parties shall promote the training of personnel competent in the fields of wetland research, management and wardening.</li> <li>iv. Contracting Parties have to formulate National Wetland Policies as an important step towards facilitating conservation and wise use of wetlands</li> <li>v. Contracting Parties to establish procedures which guarantee that the local communities are involved in the decision-making process related to wise use of wetlands</li> <li>vi. Contracting Parties have to establish National Committees according to their needs to provide a focus at national level for implementation of the convention.</li> <li>vii. Every contracting party will develop management plan for wise use of Wetlands of Ramsar sites.</li> <li>viii. Every contracting party has to develop Communication, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA) programme task force.</li> </ul>
2.	Convention of Migratory Species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Provide immediate protection for migratory species included in Appendix-I of the Convention.</li> <li>ii. Develop Agreements covering the conservation and management of migratory species included in Appendix-II of the Convention.</li> <li>iii. Range States for migratory species listed in Appendix-I or Appendix-II should inform the COP through the Secretariat about the measures that they are taking to implement the provisions of this Convention for these species.</li> <li>iv. Any dispute on application or interpretation of this Convention, which may arise between two or more Parties, should be solved through negotiation between the Parties involved in the dispute.</li> <li>v. Keep the Secretariat informed with regard to which of the migratory species listed in Appendices I and II they consider themselves to be Range States.</li> </ul>
3.	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Export, import, permit and re-export certificates for specimen enlisted in CITES should be granted by specific procedure and format.</li> <li>ii. Permit should be issued by designated Management Authority of the country with its stamp control number for six month. Separate permit or certificate should be issued for each consignment of specimen.</li> <li>iii. To take appropriate domestic measures like Penalize trade, possession of such species. To confiscation, or return to state of export of such specimen to enforce the convention &amp; prohibit trade violation.</li> <li>iv. Designate ports of exit &amp; port of entry for clearance of specimen.</li> <li>v. During transit, specimen should be given a proper care to minimize the risk of injury, damage to health or cruel treatment.</li> <li>vi. A rescue centre must be organized for confiscated living specimen for look after by management authority of the state.</li> <li>vii. Each party should nominate management and scientific authorities.</li> <li>viii. Management authority of the state of import of any specimen shall cancel &amp; retain the export permit or re-export certificate and any corresponding import permit presented in respect of the import of that specimen.</li> </ul>
4.	Convention on the Law of Seas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Establishment of National and Regional Marine Scientific Technological centers.</li> <li>ii. Cooperation among international organizations that will take all appropriate measures to ensure, either directly or in close cooperation among themselves, the effective discharge of their functions and responsibilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Ensure Sustainable use of Marine Biodiversity as a common concern of human kind.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. It covers the rapidly expanding field of Biotechnology and Scientific Research.</li> <li>c. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, including as it might relate to international organized crime;</li> <li>d. Piracy and armed robbery; maritime safety and security;</li> <li>e. Oceans and climate change;</li> <li>f. Climate Preservation of the marine environment;</li> <li>g. Safety of navigation and the production of nautical charts;</li> </ul> <p>iii. Cooperation and coordination among flag states, coastal states and port states in the implementation of the convention.</p>
5 & 6	Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer & Montreal Protocol on Ozone Layer Depleting substances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The Parties shall take appropriate measures in accordance with the provisions of this Convention and of those protocols in force to which they are party to protect human health and the environment against adverse effects resulting or likely to result from human activities that modify or are likely to modify the ozone layer.</li> <li>ii. To this end, the Parties shall, in accordance with the means at their disposal and their capabilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Co-operate by means of systematic observations, research and information exchange in order to better understand and assess the effects of human activities on the ozone layer and the effects on human health and the environment from modification of the ozone layer;</li> <li>b. Adopt appropriate legislative or administrative measures and co-operate in harmonizing appropriate policies to control, limit, reduce or prevent human activities under their jurisdiction or control should it be found that these activities have or are likely to have adverse effects resulting from modification or likely modification of the ozone layer;</li> <li>c. Cooperate in the formulation of agreed measures, procedures and standards for the implementation of this Convention, with a view to the adoption of protocols and annexes;</li> <li>d. Co-operate with competent international bodies to implement effectively this Convention and protocols to which they are party.</li> </ul> </li> <li>iii. The provisions of this Convention shall in no way affect the right of Parties to adopt, in accordance with international law, domestic measures additional to those referred to in paragraphs i and ii above, nor shall they affect additional domestic measures already taken by a Party, provided that these measures are not incompatible with their obligations under this Convention.</li> <li>iv. The application of this article shall be based on relevant scientific and technical considerations.</li> </ul>
7.	Basel Convention on the control of Trans-boundary movement of Hazardous Wastes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Reduce transboundary movements of hazardous wastes;</li> <li>ii. Minimize the production of hazardous and toxic wastes;</li> <li>iii. Ensure that disposal of wastes is done in environmentally sound manner and as close to the possible source as possible; and</li> <li>iv. Assist developing countries in the environmentally sound management of hazardous and other wastes they generate.</li> </ul>
8.	Convention on Biological Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. In-situ conservation</li> <li>ii. Ex-situ conservation</li> <li>iii. Sustainable use of components of Bio diversity</li> <li>iv. Research and training on ecosystem management</li> <li>v. Public education and awareness Exchange of information with parties</li> <li>vi. Technical and scientific co-operation among parties</li> </ul>
9.	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Prepare National Action Programmes and to cooperate in implementation of Sub-Regional Action Programme (SRAP) and Regional Action Programme (RAP).</li> <li>ii. Give due priority to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, and allocate adequate resources in accordance with their circumstances and capabilities.</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iii. Establish strategies and priorities, within the framework of sustainable development plans and/or policies, to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.</li> <li>iv. Address the underlying causes of desertification and pay special attention to the socio- economic factors contributing to desertification processes.</li> <li>v. Promote awareness and facilitate the participation of local populations, particularly women and youth, with the support of non-governmental organizations, in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought; and</li> <li>vi. Provide an enabling environment by strengthening, as appropriate, relevant existing legislation and, where they do not exist, enacting new laws and establishing long-term policies and action programs.</li> </ul>
10 & 11	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) & Kyoto Protocol to UNFCCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Designation of National Implementing Entity (NIE)</li> <li>ii. Grant of host country approval to CDM Projects and endorsement for registration with CDM-Executive Board.</li> <li>iii. Preparation of Climate Change Policy and National Adaptation Plan.</li> <li>iv. Research and development and new projects in the field of Climate change.</li> <li>v. Development of Institutional mechanism.</li> <li>vi. Inventory of GHG Emissions.</li> <li>vii. Preparation of National Communication.</li> <li>viii. Capacity Building Framework</li> <li>ix. Technology Transfer Mechanism (Framework).</li> <li>x. Mitigation &amp; Adaptation Strategy.</li> <li>xi. Coordination and liaison with maximum stakeholders at federal and provincial levels.</li> <li>xii. Participation in COP/MOP Meetings.</li> <li>xiii. Strengthening of compliance with Multilateral Environmental Agreements.</li> <li>xiv. Identification of linkages of climate change with all other MEAs and streamlining the climate change policies and plans with the National Policies.</li> </ul>
12.	Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent (PIC) for certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The parties shall implement appropriate legislative and administrative measures to comply with the decisions</li> <li>ii. The parties will provide an export notification to the importing party regarding the banned or severely restricted chemicals.</li> <li>iii. The exchange of scientific, technical, economic and legal information including toxicological, eco-toxicological and safety information to be furnished.</li> <li>iv. To implement the convention, the suggested measures mention in the convention.</li> </ul>
13.	Cartagena Protocol on Bio-safety to the CBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Application of Precautionary Principle</li> <li>ii. Risk Assessment of LMOs/GMOs</li> <li>iii. Establishment of Bio-safety Clearing House by parties</li> <li>iv. Advance Informed Agreement between Parties</li> </ul>
14.	Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)	<p>The Convention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Bans Production and Use of chemicals.</li> <li>ii. Measure to reduce or eliminate releases from unintentional production</li> <li>iii. Measure to reduce or eliminate releases from stockpiles and wastes</li> <li>iv. National Implementation Plan (NIP)</li> </ul>

“the lack of necessary expertise and resources.”

The analysis revealed that as focal points are dealing with these international environmental instruments at domestic and international levels, they (60%) are aware of major obligations under various conventions and protocols (Figure-1). Provincial government agencies are not as conscious of obligations under

various international environmental instruments as academic institutions. This may be due to lack of access to information relating to MEAs at government level. The higher awareness in academic institutions may be attributed to emerging concepts of MEAs as solution to environmental problems and queries posed in brainstorming sessions in academia.

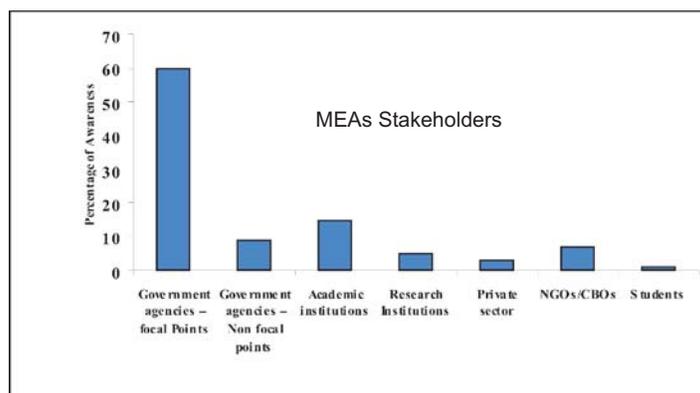


Figure-1: Comparison of Awareness of Stakeholders about their Obligations w.r.t Signed MEAs

### 3.3 Coordination and Cooperation between stakeholders for compliance to MEAs

As a party to various conventions and protocols, Pakistan has been actively participating in different Conference of Parties (CoP), Meeting of Parties (MoP), and international consultative and technical meetings organized by the United Nations and other international fora. In addition, Pakistan has adopted major declarations in the field of environment (the Stockholm Declaration; Dubai Declaration; Nairobi Declaration; and the Rio-Declarations). Pakistan also adheres to the Charter of the United Nations; the Statute of the International Court of Justice (ICJ); and the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. Pakistan is an active member of the South Asian Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC); Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Plan of Action; Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM); and South Asia Regional Seas Programme.

The Government of Pakistan accords high priority for implementation of international legal instruments in the country. National focal points which are responsible for decision making on respective treaties have been designated for each international treaty ratified. Ministry of Environment, Government of Pakistan is the focal Ministry to deal with 14 environment related conventions and protocols. Respective focal points in the Ministry of Environment have taken several important measures, such as legislations, policies and action plans to implement MEAs in Pakistan. However, the implementation of these measures is not exemplary. The main problem is the lack of access to technical information relating to MEAs, understanding of the complexities of mechanics of MEAs and lack of coordination among

implementing agencies as faced by Sri Lanka [5].

The focal points are not able to meet their commitments because obviously they do not know what their commitments are and what benefits Pakistan may derive out of compliance to the particular MEA. This is a serious problem. Due to frequent changes of the subject areas of government agencies, focal points also change very often. In this changing process, in some cases, the focal points of some MEAs may not be clear about their role and function. Another disadvantage of this phenomenon is lack of networking with technical community of other parties and secretariats of the conventions. If there is a dedicated center for MEAs implementation, one can find remedy for these issues.

Therefore, as a solution to these problems and to serve the purpose of institutional memory of UN meetings, high level segments and development of Pakistan's response to various issues, the National MEAs Secretariat has been established at the Ministry of Environment. It started functioning in April 2007. It is the centrum/focal organization for major environment and sustainable development related international conventions and treaties for coordination and enhancement of implementation of MEAs in the country.

As strategy for management of information on MEAs, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Government of Bangladesh, planned to establish a MEA Cell in the Ministry to coordinate the activities on MEAs [6]. National Environment Commission Secretariat (NECS) is working in Bhutan for this purpose [7]. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Sri Lanka established the Environmental Treaties Reference Centre (ETRC) as a strategy for management of information on all MEAs [5].

## Fulfilling Environment Related International Commitments through MEAS in Pakistan

In Pakistan, the National MEAs Secretariat involves all focal points of MEAs and stakeholders, such as government agencies professionals, academics, NGOs, CBOs and the public in updating Pakistan's stance and decision making. Through this Secretariat, the government raises public awareness and consults stakeholders on the legal instrument that the country undertakes or plans to sign/ratify. It functions as a related information source, which stores reference materials and documents relevant to all MEAs, and update them frequently for the benefit of the Federal and Provincial partners.

### 3.4 Analysis of Policies and Strategies/ Action Plans to implement MEAs

The analysis revealed that the area-wise key policies and strategies/Action Plans have been developed to implement MEAs in Pakistan. These policies include National Environment Policy (2005); National CDM Policy; National Forestry Policy (2011); National Sanitation Policy (2006), National Drinking Water Policy (2009); Pakistan Trade Control of Wild Fauna and Flora Act (2010); Pakistan Energy Conservation Bill (2010); National Rangeland Policy (2011); National Wetlands Policy (2011); Climate Change Policy (2011); Trade Policy (2009-10); Pakistan National Policy and Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development in Pakistan (2009) and its derivative - Sindh Fisheries and Aquaculture Strategy (2010-2013), as well as the Merchant Marine Policy (2000-2001).

Major plans included National Land Use Plan (NLUP); National Environment Action Plan (NEAP), which is a multi-donor national level plan covering 4 core areas, namely: Clean water, Clean air, Energy Efficiency, Ecosystem Management; Forestry Sector Master

Plan (1995); Biodiversity Action Plan; National Action Plan to Combat Desertification; the National Environment Action Plan - Support Programme (NEAP-SP); National Action Plan for Wetlands (2002); Pakistan Clean Air Programme (PCAP); and Building Energy Code of Pakistan for Energy Efficiency & Conservation Measures.

Among the important strategies are Poverty Reduction Strategy (2001); Mid-Term Development Framework (2005-2010); Pakistan National Operational Strategy for Clean Development Mechanism (CDM 2006); National Conservation Strategy (1992) and Provincial and District Conservation Strategies, i.e. Sarhad Conservation Strategy, Balochistan Conservation Strategy and Northern Areas Conservation Strategy; National Bio-safety Guidelines; WAPDA's Vision (2025); and First National Communication on Climate Change.

Pakistan has also developed National Standards for Drinking Water Quality; and National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS) for Noise, Ambient Air, Motor Vehicle Exhaust and Noise (Amended) to protect public health through ensuring provision of healthy environment to the people of the country. Though some of these plans have been developed before the establishment of National MEAs Secretariat, the respondents have stated that all these action plans have benefited in the implementation phase and when they are updated.

The survey revealed that a large number of projects and activities have benefited from the National MEAs Secretariat. Such activities include preparation for COP / MOP meetings of various Conventions and Protocols; preparation for National Capacity Self Assessment (NCSA); and preparation and processing

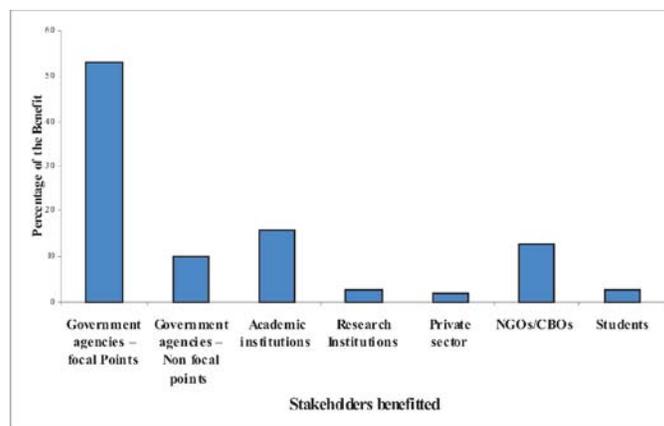


Figure - 2: Comparison of Benefits to Stakeholders from National MEAs Secretariat

of GEF proposals and facilitation of project implementation; enhancement/development of Protected Area Management; and preparation of concept papers / PIF for GEF Programme. It was also revealed that the National MEAs Secretariat has supported activities related to broad subject areas, including desertification and land degradation, biodiversity, forestry and chemical management [8].

Based on the respondents' perception and inputs, the National MEAs Secretariat benefited various categories / groups as presented in Figure-2.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Priorities and objectives of MEAs vary significantly from one international instrument to another, while the common aspects include the sustainable development focus of the three Rio Conventions (CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC), the sustainable use of natural resources and the environment, and the protection of the environment in such a way as to ensure its sustainable use. Based on different stages of implementation of these MEAs, the spectrum in priorities of Pakistan has been quite broad. Pakistan is attaching greater emphasis on cross-cutting themes for many that are primarily of a functional nature, such as strengthening of the capacities to meet the country's obligations or responsibilities under these agreements, enhancing coordination among implementing agencies, public education and awareness, strengthening scientific basis for decision-making, and strengthening international partnerships.

Main institutions of Pakistan have been participating in MEAs activities include: Conference of the Parties (COP), the secretariat, advisory bodies, subsidiary bodies, and clearing-house mechanism for effective decision-making regarding the overall implementation and development of programme of work and strategic plans, budget and the revision of annexes. The record of Pakistan participation in MEAs has improved significantly over the years. Environmental treaty acceptance has been driven by Pakistan's interface with the global environmental institutions, the demands of international financial and donor institutions and states, and increasingly, the emergence of local environmental actors and interests.

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