

**Government of Pakistan  
Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division  
Press Release**

**Dr. Sania Nishtar: “Ehsaas’ premise is grounded in the importance of fostering public-private partnerships, strengthening institutions, transparency and good governance”**



July 17, 2019- Islamabad: Dr. Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation and federal minister met with a high-powered U.S.- Pakistan Business Council (USPBC) delegation led by Dr. Mehmood Khan, Chairman of the Council, at the Prime Minister’s Secretariat. The meeting was requested by USPBC. The primary objective of the delegation was to demonstrate growing interest and strengthening of U.S.- Pakistan investment ties and to explore new areas of cooperation and investment in all areas including the social sectors. Dr. Nishtar elaborated on plans underway to engage the private sector in the Ehsaas framework, which encompasses 115 policy actions to be executed by 28 federal ministries/divisions/agencies for its execution.

The delegation was accompanied by several members companies of USPBC including Coca Cola Company, Global Logistics Providers, Facebook, Hecate Energy, Exxon Mobil, Citi Group, General Electric, Gilead Sciences and Uber etc. From the government’s side, Shaista Sohail, Secretary Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division (PASSD), Muhammad Saleem Ahmed

Ranjha, Secretary Board of Investment, Ali Raza Bhutta, Secretary Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and Capt. Asad, Additional Secretary PASSD were also present at the meeting.

Speaking to the delegation, Dr. Nishtar formally thanked them for visiting Pakistan. She elaborated on the Ehsaas framework: “Ehsaas is the whole of the government program and is about the creation of a ‘welfare state’ by countering elite capture and leveraging technology to create precision safety nets, promoting financial inclusion and access to digital services, supporting the economic empowerment of women, focusing on the central role of human capital formation for poverty eradication, economic growth and sustainable development, and overcoming financial barriers to accessing health and post-secondary education”.

Further, she shared that the program’s principles and approaches also center on tapping whole-of-government multi-sectoral collaboration for solutions, ensuring joint federal-provincial leadership, and mainstreaming the role of the private sector through an approach which will provide a level playing field on the one hand and foster locally-relevant innovation on the other, to create jobs and promote livelihood in quick-win areas. The program’s premise is grounded in the importance of fostering public-private partnerships, strengthening institutions, transparency and good governance.

To the extent of Ehsaas, she elaborated that there are three avenues of collaborating with private sector. “These avenues include (a) regular contracting following the policies and procedures of PIPRA in ways that promote transparency (b) private sector commitments for big ticket targets of social protection and poverty alleviation policy, and (c) Solutions Innovation Challenge to develop value chains and solutions for poverty at scale by identifying private sector partners.

Prevalence of digital poverty in Pakistan among marginalized communities particularly women was also mirrored and both sides committed to explore all possible ways of benefitting the deprived communities by replicating the best international poverty alleviation practices in an innovative and affordable manner specifically capitalizing at the potential of Facebook, other social media streams, and Ehsaas TV program.

USPBC highly appreciated the effective steps being taken by government to create a new and encouraging environment for engaging rigorously with the private sector. They also took special interest to invest in health aspects of poverty alleviation particularly primary healthcare, maternal health, antenatal care, and hepatitis and HIV elimination along with setting up hospitals and diagnostic equipments etc in lagging regions in an innovative and cost-effective way. Further, agri-value chains, digital and financial inclusion of women in remote areas, online platform for formalization of employment for poor, marginalized and domestic workers which

can help daily wagers, especially women earn a living wage with dignity also came under discussion.

Towards the conclusion of meeting, Dr. Nishtar stated that Ehsaas is based on cross government collaborations in every sector of poverty alleviation that creates a room for private sector engagement. She then shared that 'Ehsaas Strategy' is in the final stages of peer review and will soon be out in the public domain as a living document.

The delegation expressed an interest in exploring avenues for collaboration and modalities for facilitating public private partnerships.

USPBC is the premier organization in Washington dedicated to the broad advancement of U.S. commercial engagement with Pakistan. During this visit, the delegation has conducted a series of meetings with important government officials including the honorable Prime Minister of Pakistan.