



PAKISTAN WATER CHARTER

"And, indeed, We have created above you seven [celestial] orbits; and never are We unmindful of [any aspect of Our] creation. And We send down water from the skies in accordance with a measure [set by Us], and then We cause it to lodge in the earth: but, behold, We are most certainly able to withdraw this [blessing]! And by means of this [water] We bring forth for you gardens of date palms and vines wherein you have fruit abundant and whereof you eat."

Surah Al M'uminun: 17-19
Al Quran al Kareem

Allah Almighty has blessed Pakistan with plenty of surface and sub-surface water resources. Gushing rivers from the watersheds of the magnificent Himalayas sprawl over our vast alluvial plains, making them one of the most fertile regions of the planet. The great Indus River System has historically been the lifeline of the Indus Valley, home to one of the world's most ancient civilizations. Abundant availability of water has remained central to the evolution of our civilization and will continue to remain so, from the plains of ancient Harrappa and Mohenjo Daro to the Gandhara plateau of today – water remains the fuel of life.

The looming shortage of water in our beloved country has now become a grave threat to our food, energy and water security. Today, Pakistan's water economy is in acute danger of running dry. Our per capita availability of water, which was above 5,200 cubic meters at the time of independence, has now dropped below the minimum threshold of 1,000 cubic meters per head, officially making us a water scarce country. The prevalent water scarcity is inching towards a full-blown water crisis and is likely to become an existential threat, unless we act decisively!

The remarkable progress made by Pakistan in the first four decades from 1950 to 1990 increased the availability of water withdrawn from the Indus River System making Pakistan self sufficient in food. But

the progress we have made is now under threat. It is high time that we harness the opportunities that are within our reach, in order to ensure a sustainable supply of water for food and energy security and to meet the challenges of climate change.

This extraordinary situation requires extra ordinary measures. Business-as-usual is simply no longer an option. We need to focus all our energy and acumen, not only to avert an anthropogenic water crisis but to mitigate the impacts of climate change, as Pakistan is considered by experts to be one of the most climate vulnerable countries on the planet. If the glacial melt which accounts for 40 percent of our river flows accelerates, we will face heavy flooding in some years and as the snow cap shrinks, the annual river flows will begin to decline. This, combined with the more than usual variations in rainfall, can play havoc with the country's agriculture sector and threaten its food security system.

Taking cognizance of this grave state of affairs, we deem it necessary to sign a Charter in the broader interest of the present and future generations of this country, and have forged a consensus that:

- The demand-supply gap of freshwater is broadening on account of the population explosion, rapid urbanization and sub-optimal use of this precious resource in all sectors;
- sustainable consumption and production patterns need to be adopted by law as a water intensive foot-print is no longer an option;
- since there is no additional water available to inject in the Indus River System, a holistic and aggressive management regime for the judicious use of available resources is mandatory;
- being a single basin country lying in a Monsoon region, Pakistan needs to build a number of reservoirs so as to conserve some of annual surplus flows that escape into the sea

keeping in view the effects of sea water intrusion, importance of conserving aquatic ecosystem and to act as a shield against water related disasters and climate change;

- conservation and scientific management of water is as important as augmentation; It is unacceptable and ironic that a substantial portion of the water diverted to canals is lost in the conveyance system;
- contamination of water has taken its toll on public health and 80% diseases are water borne, responsible for billions of rupees in lost productivity and medical and social costs.

With the commitment and intent to achieve water security for our people, we hereby pledge that;

1. Top most priority will be given to water sector and development spending will be increased significantly with judicious distribution among all sub sectors including disaster management and WASH
2. Inter provincial coordination will be fostered to implement transformational infrastructure development in an equitable and amicable and harmonious manner
3. Transfer of political power from one regime to the other does not affect water sector development in any way and that approved projects shall continue as per agreed time and cost stipulations
4. Water resources planning and development will be entrusted to high level qualified professionals.

We firmly resolve that dedicated efforts will be made and all resources will be utilized to avert the water crisis and mitigate

the anticipated impact of climate change on water security. We believe that sincere efforts made today will translate into a water secure future for the coming generations of Pakistan, and we pledge to leave no stone unturned in this endeavor.

This Charter is a Call to Action and the declaration of a *water emergency*. We must now look beyond our differences and come together as a nation to rise to the challenge that is before us. We have done so before, and we can do it again. We will seize the day and secure our collective future. This is our promise to the coming generations.

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi
**Prime Minister of
Islamic Republic of Pakistan**

Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif
Chief Minister Punjab

Syed Murad Ali Shah
Chief Minister Sindh

Pervez Khan Khattak
**Chief Minister Khyber
Pakhtunkhwa**

Mir Abdul Quddoos Bezinjo
Chief Minister Balochistan