



Funded by
the European Union



- Press Release

European Union-Funded Women Leaders Project launched by UN Women and UNDP

Islamabad, 12 February: The European Union (EU), in partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has launched the Pakistan Women Leaders Project (PWL) in Islamabad. This four-year project has been funded with 4.8 million euros, and it aims to enhance women's leadership and political participation in Pakistan with the objective of advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

While addressing the audience, Dr. Shahida Rehmani, Member National Assembly (MNA) and Secretary of the National Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC), stated, "Women's leadership is the cornerstone of progress. Empowering women means empowering Pakistan. This project is both timely and a crucial step in the right direction."

During the keynote remarks, Dr. Riina Kionka, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, said, "The European Union is committed to promoting gender equality and women's leadership. The launch of the Pakistan Women Leaders Project is a significant step towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society. One distinctive feature of this program is the mentorship program through which aspiring women parliamentarians, local councillors and women leaders will be mentored by engagement of the civil society to play a crucial role in advancing gender equality. With women comprising nearly half of Pakistan's 240-million population, closing the gender gap in leadership through such mentorship programs is critical."

Mr. Jamshed M. Kazi, Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan, emphasized the project's relevance for promoting gender equality and stated, "This project addresses important challenges, such as increasing women's participation in the electoral process and decision-making roles, and addressing socio-cultural and economic barriers that limit their engagement in political life. The Pakistan Women Leaders Project aims to promote women's leadership across Pakistan."

Commenting on the project, Dr. Samuel Rizk, Resident Representative of UNDP Pakistan, said, "*Empowering women as leaders through social and political participation is central to addressing systemic inequalities and creating a more equitable future. Through the PWL Project, UNDP will support the design and implementation of civic and voter education campaigns for women and socially marginalized groups across 15 districts with the lowest voter enrolment. We will also collaborate with partners to improve regulations on preventing violence against these groups in political and electoral processes.*"

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. www.unwomen.org

In a presentation, Ms. Nighat Siddique Additional Director General, Election Commission of Pakistan, elaborated the role of the ECP in promoting women's political participation. she stated that the PWL project aims to strengthen women's leadership and address structural barriers that hinder their full participation in politics and decision-making, which would contribute to a more equitable and inclusive future for Pakistan.

The event featured inspiring speeches, a presentation and an animation on the project's objectives and strategies. The audience included policymakers, civil society representatives, development partners, parliamentarians, political parties, and media, reflecting a shared commitment to the cause of gender equality.

The EU-funded 'Pakistan Women Leaders Project' aims to amplify women's political participation and leadership in Pakistan. It is implemented by UN Women and UNDP with support of the European Union. This project takes a comprehensive approach to advancing women's leadership. Through capacity building and mentorship programs, legislative and policy reforms, and collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders, it aims to create a more equitable and inclusive political environment.

For further information about the launch and project contact:

Samar Saeed Akhtar, Press and Information Officer at The European Union Delegation to Pakistan, samar-saeed.akhtar@eeas.europa.eu

Erum Fareed, Communications Officer- UN Women at erum.fareed@unwomen.org, or 92 346 8502146