

Smart, Harmonized Environmental Regulations and Provincial Tax Systems Essential for Sustainability and Ease of Doing Business

Islamabad, 19 February 2025 – Government and private stakeholders agreed on the critical need for harmonizing legislation across various domains, including provincial taxes and environmental regulations at a public-private dialogue. This agreement was the highlight of a multi-stakeholder national convening organized by CoRe Alliance, Baby Food and Nutrition Council, and Fruit Juice Council.

This harmonization was declared as pivotal to unlocking business potential in Pakistan, fostering economic growth and ensuring ease of living for the general populace. The national convening in Bhurban brought together political leaders, federal and provincial agencies, private sector, and media for impactful discussions on regulatory efficiency and business facilitation.

The convening was inaugurated by Ali Pervaiz Malik, the State Minister for Finance and Revenue, with special addresses from Coordinator to the Prime Minister Rana Ihsaan Afzal, and Federal Secretary SIFC, Jameel Qureshi in the inaugural session.

The convening focused on Regulatory Framework for Ease of Doing Business through Harmonization, Growing Challenges of Parallel Trade and Counterfeit Products, and Packaging & Environmental Regulations.

Ali Pervaiz Malik emphasized the need for policy realignment to enhance business growth and highlighted ongoing regulatory reforms, including the Regulatory Guillotine, National Tax Council Activation and Board of Investment (BOI) Facilitation Desk. Rana Ihsaan Afzal spoke about Uraan Pakistan and proposed focusing on three 'E's: export-driven growth, enhancing IT sector, and ensuring sustainable energy policies. Jameel Qureshi outlined eight key imperatives for sustainable economic growth, including transitioning toward export-led growth, adopting a long-term economic roadmap, digitizing economic processes, and incentivizing domestic production. Sheikh Waqar Ahmad, a representative from the industry alliances, identified the importance of public-private consultation for developing consensus and the need for harmonization of regulations in driving the economic agenda.

Harmonization of food standards nationally, in recent years, was recognized as the gold standard, with attendees urging the same approach for other areas. Differences between tax structures across provinces were determined as a hinderance to ease of doing business, with an Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) representative stating that the government was working with the World Bank on coordinating tax reform initiatives. Counterfeit and spurious products, as well as the wide availability of gray trade products that violate SRO237A, were declared as key reasons for legal businesses losing market share. The potential for exporting packaged food was highlighted to capture growing markets for Halal products. It was also highlighted how successful models of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes have always adopted a phased approach and have required strong collaboration and shared responsibilities between public and private stakeholders, including consumers. Recycling was recognized as the backbone of a circular economy.

Ms. Farzana Altaf, Director General of Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency, delivered the closing address, emphasizing the need for a single environmental legislation across the country, supporting circular economy.

In addition to industry representatives, the following government bodies were present: Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), BOI, Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority (PSQCA), all Provincial Food Authorities, FBR, Ministries of Commerce and Industries & Production, Senate of Pakistan, National Tariff Commission and Pakistan as well as provincial Environmental Protection Agencies (EPAs).

For further information, please contact:

Arisha Asif

Manager Operations

arisha@corealliance.org.pk