

# A National Conference on Indus Delta

Tuesday 10 February 2009, by [BALOCH Latif](#), [BALOCH Shafi](#), [Correspondent\(s\)](#), [SHAH Mohammad Ali](#) (Date first published: 20 February 2009).

**National Conference on Indus Delta with the theme of Release of water to downstream Kotri. On 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2009. At hotel Regent Plaza Karachi.**

**In conference decided that Struggle for New Water Paradigm in Pakistan. Unanimously agreed to form a New Water paradigm Commission of Pakistan.**

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Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum organized a one day conference on 'Indus Delta on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 at Hotel Regent Plaza in Karachi.

The conference was attended by water experts, researchers, civil society organizations and a large number of community members.

The chief guest of conference was Marvi Memon and chaired the conference by A N G Abbasi. Besides, Qazi Abdul Majeed, Keisar Bangali, Karamat Ali, Abrar Qazi, Mohammad Khan Memon, Humaira Alwani, Dr.Ghulam Akber, Tahir Qureshi, Nazir Memon, Zulfiqar Halepoto, Ejaz Qureshi, Gulab Shah and Khadim Hussain Muhammad Ali Shah, Chairperson Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum welcomed the participants and explained the objectives of Conference.

Objectives of the conference were bring together the key stakeholders to discuss the problems, faced by downstream communities in Sindh and the causes of this ecological disaster. The speakers examined and discussed different solutions and local ideas to prevent such a massive ecological disaster in the Indus Delta.

The one-day conference consisted of two sessions one technical session and second political session. Before start of the technical sessions, the introductory sitting was led by the representatives of the partner organizations.

They said, are destroying ecological setting in lower Sindh, particularly in Delta region along with raising political disorder in overall Sindhi society.

The experts also discussed different issues and dimensions of urban infrastructure in the context of degradation of coastal areas. Participants particularly referred to the disposal of untreated sewage and industrial pollution of the urban areas like Karachi into the sea.

This practice, has led to destruction of mangroves— a nursery and shelter zone of fish species. Due to extreme decline in water flow towards the sea in the delta for over two decades has caused eradication of mangrove forest to one-third, submergence of over 2.2 million acres fertile land into

sea, depleting fisheries resources, pushing two million people below poverty line and causing migration of nearly .3 million people from the deltaic areas.

In conference the speakers and participants urged and demanded that No more water-cuts are made in the upstream of the Indus Delta nor any such scheme be pursued that necessitates Further Diversion Of Water. It is a must to rehabilitate the tail-end of Indus River that is the Indus Delta. This means no more dams on Indus including the contemplated Kalabagh and Bhashah Dam. Besides, the gross damage so far caused in the Indus Delta as a result of water cuts for decades be compensated fully in the light of a comprehensive study of the damage to lives, livelihoods, mangroves, fisheries, livestock and other manifestations of bio-diversity in the Indus Delta.

Participants stressed the need for a change in approach of policymakers, whose ill- advised policies have created such a situation. Water management is a global issue and remained a major source of conflict among the nations. The governments must tackle the issue for durable peace they opined.

Declaration derived from the suggestions of the participants, were presented at the concluding session. The participants approved the declaration by raising their hands in their favor.

In conference unanimously decided that in Pakistan there is no any people centered policy as well as the ecology friendly in view of this participants of conference approved to form the New Water Paradigm Commission. The commission will be comprised on civil society, environmentalists, water experts, scientists, communities and politicians.

First meeting of the commission will be held first week of February, 2009 and PFF will host the meeting.

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## **KARACHI: Call to establish Indus rehabilitation body**

**By Latif Baloch**

KARACHI, Jan 19: A national conference on the Indus delta held here on Monday urged the government to constitute an Indus delta rehabilitation and revival commission and allocate resources for the revival of all forms of life that had been damaged and provide an alternative livelihood to all communities affected by the existing inequitable water distribution system and consequently deprived of their means of living.

Earlier, speakers representing civil society, non-governmental organisations, water experts, researchers, environmentalists and representatives of the fishermen community expressed concern over the degradation of the delta which, they argued, had a multi-dimensional effect on the people, language, ecology, biodiversity, and the region's overall environment because of reduction in fresh water flows and fertile silt.

They said sea intrusion had inundated more than 2.2 million acres of farmland in Thatta and Badin districts, adding that the resulting degradation manifested itself in the reduction of mangrove coverage (an important fish habitat), declining fish stocks, including extinction of Palla fish, shrinking agricultural land and vegetation, vertical and horizontal intrusion of the sea, degraded groundwater, and a significant reduction in livestock's grazing areas.

Arguing that the Indus delta region had been placed under a major strain since the Indus flows had been reduced, they said it was badly affecting the down Kotri releases.

They said it was regrettable that "the decision-makers consider releases from the Kotri Barrage and through the delta into the Arabian sea as a wastage while devising their plans".

Consequently, they maintained, a massive devastation had been caused to mangrove forests, which were steadily depleting, leaving the region vulnerable to a greater damage from stormwater flooding. Thousands of people who survived on Indus water had migrated from the area, they said.

The conference, titled "Release of water to downstream Kotri", was organised by the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum. The first technical session was addressed by economist Kaiser Bengali, water expert Qazi Abdul Majeed, A.N.G Abassi, representatives of the IUCN, Dr Ghulam Akbar (WWF), Paul Fanning (FAO) and community leader Ghulab Shah. MNA Marvi Memon was the chief speaker.

In his analytical presentation, Mr Bengali gave the historical background of the decrease of water flow from the Indus during the past 10 years. He attributed it to the engineering-intensive and high-cost maintenance water projects launched by the planners without considering their negative impact on the overall situation in the future.

Mr Bengali called for adopting a sustainable and better water management policy and preparing low-cost projects instead of mega projects, which were not maintainable.

Community leader Ghulab Shah painted a grim picture of the Indus region, saying that owing to poverty thousands of people had been compelled to migrate to other parts of the province in search of bread and butter.

Several speakers complained that Sindh was not receiving its due share of water according to the Indus water treaty and called for urgent steps to remedy the situation.

The conference also adopted a declaration, saying that water was a fundamental element of life on the land and thus access to water was a human right that must be protected equally for all people, in all places and at all times. As such, water should not be treated as a commodity for trade, control and sale, but as a resource belonging to the people who depended on it for their lives.

Maintaining that water was vital for life and was a basic necessity for human survival, it called for recognising it as a top priority, universal and human right. Thus the sustainability of the biosphere and the exercise of human rights must be guaranteed on the basis of the principle of efficacy.

The declaration also called for adopting an integrated new water paradigm approach in the Indus water basin by recognising the people's fundamental human right to water and an equitable

distribution of water rights for the people living along the reaches of the Indus River, especially for communities located in the lower Indus delta. This should be established as the foundation of any water-management planning.

Considering the dire environmental conditions facing the Indus delta eco-region and their negative impact on the communities' livelihood, the conference urged that all plans, constructions and policies should ensure significant and adequate flow of water through the Indus delta.

It also stressed the need for recognising the restoration of rivers, deltas, springs, estuaries, lakes, coastal waters and protection of wetlands and aquifers as a heritage of the biosphere, including its values of collective identity, aesthetic beauty and quality of life posing a significant challenge.

The participants of the conference also declared that they would bring the issue to the notice of all stakeholders, including the government, to make them realise that the flow of water downstream Kotri was not a waste but an exigent need through resurfacing the concocted perception and inhuman stance and statements of so-called managers over the water distribution and management.

Later, the political session of the conference was addressed by Karamat Ali, director of PILER, Mohammad Khan Memon (Irsa), MPA Humera Alwani and others.

In her concluding remarks, Marvi Memon, chairperson of the National Assembly subcommittee on the environment, observed that the delta issue was not a regional issue, it was a national issue and as such it should be looked at in that perspective.

She said the NA subcommittee had taken up the issues considering its national importance as it would affect people of all regions. She said she hoped that the NA panel would come out with a solution.

She promised that the recommendations made by the conference would be considered seriously and would be implemented in a national spirit.

Earlier, PFF chairman Mohammad Ali Shah welcomed the participants and explained the theme of the conference.

\* *From Dawn:*

<http://www.dawn.com/2009/01/20/loca...>

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## **Compile accurate data of losses in delta, urge water experts**

**Tuesday, January 20, 2009**

By our correspondent

Karachi

Water experts emphasised the need to make quick assessments to ascertain data about losses in the Indus delta due to blocking water downstream Kotri for the last many years.

Speaking at a national conference on Indus Delta that was organised by Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) on Monday, experts called upon the government to constitute an Indus Delta rehabilitation and revival commission. They also urged the allocation of adequate resources for the revival of all forms of life that have been damaged, and providing alternate livelihoods to all communities who have been the victim of this inequitable distribution of water.

Speaking at the conference, former Chairperson of the Water Technical Committee and Resources, ANG Abbasi said that neither the government departments nor civil society organisations or water experts are clear regarding losses that have been caused by water shortage in the delta thus far. He said that proper documentation, along with correct mapping, should be compiled so that projects for the preservation of the delta and the communities can be launched. He said that if it was not possible to compile this data since the inception of Pakistan (1947), then at least it should be assembled from 1991, when the Water Accord was formulated.

Marvi Memon, chairperson of the sub-committee on Environment in the National Assembly, in her concluding remarks assured the audience that “your voice has been acknowledged by the forum of the National Assembly.” She said that the Indus Delta is not only the habitat and source of livelihood for fishermen belonging to Thatta and Badin districts, but is an asset for the entire nation. The committee has designed recommendations but there is a need of political will to get it implemented in its true spirit. Without national consensus it is impossible to achieve the target, she elaborated.

Speakers pointed out that neither were adequate water resources available nor were enough funds made available to the government to implement the projects of national interests. It needed political determination to make such policies to resolve the issues and make preparations to avert disasters. They said that water is a fundamental element of life and should not be treated as a commodity for trade, control and sale, but as a resource belonging to the people who depend on it, they added.

They said that economic benefits accrued from environmental services provided by the delta, including shielding from floods, carbon sunk, fishing, protection of coastal land from erosion, sustaining food chain in the coastal zones, fisheries, had not been fully appreciated. There must be a realization and calculation of such losses.

Apart from a large number of community women hailing from deltaic region, Tahir Qureshi of IUCN, Dr Ghulam Akbar of WWF Pakistan, water experts Qazi Abdul Majid, renowned economist Qaisar Bengali, PILER Director Karamat Ali, PPP legislator Humaira Alvani, PFF chairperson Mohammed Ali Shah, Zulfiqar Halepoto and others also participated in the conference.

*\* From The News:*

[http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily\\_det...](http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_det...)

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## **Call for establishing Indus Delta Rehab body**

**By SHAFI BALOCH**

January 19, 2009

KARACHI - Speakers at a conference held on Monday expressed deep concerns over the depletion of Indus Delta and urged authorities concerned to constitute an Indus Delta Rehabilitation and Revival Commission (IDRRC).

"The government and the authorities concerned would have to chalk out a strategy on emergency basis to release water to downstream Kotri," demanded the representatives of different walks of life while approving declaration in the conference titled "National Conference on Indus Delta" organised by Pakistan Fisher-folk Forum (PFF) held at a local hotel.

The speakers included Marvi Memon, Chairperson Environment Committee of National Assembly, Mohammad Ali Shah, Chairperson PFF, renowned economist Qaiser Bengali, Humera Alwani MPA, A.N.G. Tahir Qureshi of IUCN, Paul Fanning of the FAO, Abrar Qazi, Chairperson of SDF, Karamat Ali, Director PILER, social activist Khadim Hussein, Mohammad Khan Memon of IRSA, water expert Qazi Abdul Majeed, Dr Ghulam Akbar of WWF, Gulab Shah, Sami Memon of PFF and others.

They said that the Indus Delta was facing alarming situation due to the negligence of concerned authorities.

They added that the authorities would have to take immediate steps to save the fertile slit of the Indus Delta.

*\* From The Nation:*

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-n...>