



FRIENDS OF INDUS FORUM

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INTRODUCTION

Friends of Indus Forum brings together concerned citizens, conservation activists, intellectuals and passionate individuals on a common platform for the protection of the Indus Ecoregion. The Indus for All Programme of WWF Pakistan has played an instrumental role in establishing the Friends of Indus Forum. The aim of the forum is **to address the multiple factors that have generated diverse threats to natural ecosystems in which the survival of species is becoming increasingly difficult and in which people dependent on natural resources are being pushed into poverty and despair.** The Forum agrees that the vicious cycle of poverty and destruction of natural resources has been exacerbated in recent years and that this trend first needs to be halted and then reversed to preserve the biodiversity richness of Sindh.

BACKGROUND

The Indus River is one of the world's largest rivers. It stretches from the mighty Himalayas in the north and pours into the Arabian Sea in the South, passing and feeding into a wide range of unique geographical and geological features and biodiversity. The richness of the Indus headwaters, tributaries, flood plains, deltaic regions and marine coastal zone supports various trades and occupations and hundreds of thousands of people depend upon it for livelihood. The Indus River Basin represents a mega scale natural laboratory containing a complete range of ecosystems divided into four distinct areas: the Upper Indus Basin, the Himalayan Foothills, the Lower and Middle Indus Basin, and Yaghistan. The lower portion of the Indus has already been included in a listing of Global 200 Ecoregions by WWF-International as an area of global importance.

The Indus Ecoregion, situated in the south of Pakistan spans over approximately two-thirds of the province, covering 18 districts of Sindh. The Indus delta is the fifth largest delta in the world¹, with a total area of about 600,000 ha. The delta has been formed largely under arid climatic conditions and was, until recently, characterized by high river discharge, moderate tide and high wave energy conditions. The Indus River in Sindh gives shape to five distinct ecosystems:

- Riverine Forests
- Freshwater Lakes
- Water desert ecosystem (complex ecosystem)
- Deltaic ecosystem
- Agriculture ecosystem

RATIONALE FOR THE FORUM

Over the years natural and anthropogenic stresses have substantially degraded the ecological systems of the Indus Ecoregion, some of them beyond repair. The upstream hydrographic modification in the Indus coupled with rapid urbanization, overpopulation, deforestation, discharge of untreated effluents, pollution and faulty irrigation schemes have given rise to innumerable hazards. Sea intrusion, salinity, decreasing cover of natural forests, shrinkage of aquifers, turning of freshwater bodies into brackish ones, deterioration

¹ <http://www.ramsar.org>



The members during the visit of Indus Delta.



Pakistan's permanent representative at United Nations Mr. Hussain Haroon joining the Forum.

of water quality and loss of biodiversity are some of the imminent dangers confronting the sustainability and viability of the Indus. The politicization of distribution of the River Indus water has given rise to fears about the use and distribution of the River's water. These misgivings have permeated across the relevant governing bodies and populace, overshadowing the grave problems stemming out of the neglect of this rich ecological heritage that has serious social, economic, and ecological implications. Given the magnitude of the problem, WWF-Pakistan recognizes that it is beyond the scope of a single organization to bring about substantive change. There is a strong need for society to act collectively to highlight, understand, and work towards the restoration and preservation of the Indus River system and the Indus Ecoregion.

In light of this scenario, WWF-Pakistan's Indus for All Programme has helped to establish a forum - The Friends of Indus that acts as a policy watchdog by bringing together concerned citizens, conservation activists, intellectuals and passionate individuals who want to protect the collective heritage of the Indus Ecoregion, its biodiversity and associated resources.

VISION

"Ensuring prosperity for current and future generations in Indus Basin particularly lower riparian through coexistence and harmony with nature"

AIM

The aim of the Friends of Indus Forum is:

To address the multiple factors that have generated diverse threats to natural ecosystems in which the survival of the species is increasingly becoming difficult and in which people who depend on biodiversity and natural resources are pushed to poverty and despair

CONSERVATION CHARTER

1. Endeavor to reduce the threat to natural resources, biodiversity and essential habitats.
2. Raise voices for revival of lost habitats, species and resource base in collaboration with all the concerned citizens
3. Mobilize larger community support, awareness and lobbying for nature conservancy
4. Document, publicize and demonstrate successes in biodiversity conservation. Serve as an advisory body for government of Sindh, Pakistan and any other interested group for the revival of environment in Sindh
5. Promote traditional conservation systems
6. Serve as an advisory body for Government of Sindh, Pakistan and any other interested group for the revival of environment in Sindh

PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles of the Forum are:

- **Volunteerism:** A voluntary forum based on the interest and the passion of individuals involved.



Walk for Healthy Rivers at Indus.



Group photo of the members meeting held at Hyderabad.

- **Passion:** Conservation objectives and outcomes are time consuming and require passion and perseverance.
- **Community's Right:** Communities that depend on resources have innate right to use and protect them. External forces must respect these rights.
- **Equality and respect:** All the members and participants would enjoy equal rights, responsibilities and be treated with respect without any distinction on the basis of class, caste, religion, gender and ethnicity.
- **Balancing Act:** All the living organisms are essential components of nature and must be preserved for balancing the ecosystems and creating a healthy environment

PROPOSED STRATEGIES

To carry out its commitment, the Friends of Indus Forum plans to adopt the following measures:

- Work as an independent forum comprising members of diverse disciplines and backgrounds;
- Develop environmental constituency through increased passionate membership;
- Lobby and advocate with policy makers for environmental conservation;
- Effectively involve media, academia and civil society to promote environmental conservation;
- Highlight individual role models in the area of nature conservation;
- Prepare and promote youth as future custodians of environmental conservation.

MEMBERS

Mr. Abdullah Hussain Saeed Haroon
 Mr. Zahid Kerio
 Mr. Pir Mansoor Ali
 Mr. Naseer Memon
 Mr. Nazir Essani
 Prof. Qalandar Shah Lakiari
 Mr. Nazir Ahmed Memon
 Prof. Aijaz Ahmed Qureshi
 Mr. Zulfiqar Halepoto
 Mr. Zaffar Junejo
 Mr. Ali Muhammad Sheikh
 Mr. Aamir Latif Siddiqui
 Mr. Ali Akbar Rahimoo
 Dr. Louis Flam
 Mr. Ali Akbar Kalhoro
 Pir Zafar Ali
 Mr. Majeed Mangrio
 Dr. Suleman Shaikh
 Ms. Zubaida Birwani
 Dr. Yameen Memon
 Mr. Pir Qadir Dino Shah
 Dr. Ali Murtaza Dharejo
 Mr. Mustafa Ujjan
 Mr. Akhtar Hussain Samoo
 Mr. Abdul Gaffar Malik
 Dr Akash Ansari
 Mr. Mukkhtiar Sahito
 Mr. Aziz Ranjhani
 Dr. Ghulam Akbar
 Mr. Nasir Ali Panhwar
 Mr. Majeed Thaheem
 Mr. Abdul Jabbar Bhatti
 Dr. M. Ayoub Shaikh
 Mr. Hamir Soomro
 Mr. Ali Akbar Hussain
 Mr. Sadaruddin Jatoi

MEMBERSHIP

Friends of Indus Forum is a voluntary forum based on the interests of the individual members.

The Office Bearers of the Friends of Indus Forum:

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Joint Secretary



Mr. Zahid Keerio
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Mr. Zulfiqar Halepoto
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If you would like to become a member of the Friends of Indus Forum, please contact:

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