



**PRESS RELEASE**

**Subject: European Union encourages Pakistani SMEs to seek opportunities in EU Single Market**

Lahore, 13 October 2021: As part of its efforts to support Pakistani SMEs to access opportunities in the European Single Market and maximize the benefit from GSP+, the European Union held the EU-Pakistan Business Forum for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) in Lahore today.

The EU-Pakistan Business Forum aims to provide opportunities for both EU and Pakistani businesses to work together to become engines of development and partnership and contribute to enhancing bilateral trade.

The event was attended by representatives from the Government, European Union Member States and local SMEs from four broad sectors - Fans, Auto parts, Light Engineering; Rice, Fruits and Dairy; Sports and Surgical Goods; Hosiery, Garments, Value added Textile and Leather.

Government representatives included Small and Medium Enterprise Authority (SMEDA) CEO Hashim Raza and Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT) CEO Erfa Iqbal.

Speakers focused on the importance of SMEs and their role in value addition. Participants were informed about how SMEs could benefit from the European Union's GSP+ Scheme, providing two thirds of tariff lines duty free access to the EU market with the rest on preferential duties.

The Pakistani economy consists of almost 3.3 million SMEs. These consist of service providers, manufacturing units and start-ups. SMEs make up over 30% of Pakistan's GDP, account for approximately 25% of export generation and provide over 70% industrial employment.

While in the EU, Europe's 25 million small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of the EU economy. SMEs provide two out of three industrial jobs in the EU.

The Business Forum aims to play a key role in bringing together SME's from EU and Pakistan to enhance their export orientation, collaboration in technology transfer and promotion of businesses.

The EU Ambassador to Pakistan, Androulla Kaminara said,

*"In Lahore, we have managed to bring together SMEs working in diverse sectors from across Punjab. This diverse range of products, which are covered under GSP+, represent a huge opportunity for Pakistani SMEs to allow them to fully benefit from GSP+ boost trade and strengthen bilateral trade for a prosperous Pakistan.*

*Through this forum, we are trying to help create linkages between EU and Pakistani SMEs to understand their challenges and help overcome them – with a particular focus on technology transfer.*

*With the strong involvement of the business community today and continued engagement with the Government, through the EU-Pakistan Business Forum we hope to develop initiatives, build capacity and provide technical assistance to support the SME development process in Pakistan. I remain confident that together we can expand the benefit of GSP+ boost trade and ultimately allow Pakistan to take full advantage of GSP+"*

The final event of the First EU Pakistan Business Forum will be held in Karachi next month.

For more details on GSP+ - <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/pakistan/>

For more information about the proposed new GSP+ legislation [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/pakistan/104611/trade-and-sustainability-commission-proposes-new-eu-generalised-scheme-preferences-promote\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/pakistan/104611/trade-and-sustainability-commission-proposes-new-eu-generalised-scheme-preferences-promote_en)

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