



**LAUNCH EVENT**

**UNDER THE EUROPEAN UNION FUNDED PROJECT  
"GROWTH FOR RURAL ADVANCEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS  
(GRASP), PAKISTAN"**

**VIRTUAL VIA ZOOM, ISLAMABAD**

**DATE: 21 OCTOBER 2020**

Remarks by Androulla KAMINARA, Ambassador  
of the European Union to Pakistan, Islamabad

***Express few welcome words***

Honourable Mr. Razak Dawood, Advisor to the Prime Minister on  
Commerce, Industries and Investment,

Respected representatives from the public and private sectors; the  
development partners; civil society; Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning and a warm welcome to all of you on behalf of the  
EU. It is a pleasure to be with you today on the launch of the EU  
funded project, Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable  
Progress (GRASP).

***Why are we here?***

The purpose of this event is to apprise you, of the salient features of  
the GRASP programme and to provide an update on its  
implementation status.

However, before we proceed further, let me first felicitate the Ministry of Commerce and the International Trade Centre (ITC) for jointly organising this event. I would also like to thank all the participants for their presence.

### *About the EU in Pakistan*

As you may know, the EU has a long development partnership history with Pakistan including also the provision of technical and financial assistance aligned with the priorities of the Government of Pakistan in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Apart from development assistance, which represents a portfolio of above EUR 600 million in grants, the EU has granted GSP+ (Generalised System of Preferences) to Pakistan in 2014 that provides an open market access to Pakistan's trade sector. This is a measure of support to the economy and should help Pakistan in diversify its export basket. However, Pakistan has to meet certain conditions, comply with and show progress in meeting the 27 international UN conventions, applicable in the field of human rights, labour rights, environment and governance, to fully benefit from the GSP+.

The EU firmly believes that the socio-economic development milestones in Pakistan can be achieved through enhancing domestic economy, business and trade volumes and accessing appropriate markets involving particularly the private sector and women in business.

We also believe that Pakistan has rich and hardworking human resources with the potential to contribute to reduction of poverty via transformation of the rural economy, businesses, value addition and building capacities of its people, particularly the youth bulge.

In Pakistan a successful, sustainable and healthy life and economic success in rural areas is not possible without women. Two third of the Pakistani population live in rural areas and agriculture is the main labour activity of rural women with approximately 75% of women and girls employed in the agriculture sector, which nevertheless is neither acknowledged nor documented.

## **COVID-19**

The EU has supported Pakistan as it faced the extraordinary challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have re-appropriated EUR 150 million for Pakistan to counter the impact of the pandemic including also in the GRASP targeted areas in Balochistan and Sindh.

## **About the GRASP Project**

The EUR 50 M GRASP programme has been carefully designed to address the numerous factors required to contribute to sustainable and long-term development of selected sectors with a high growth potential for the benefit men and women of the rural population.

While the support under GRASP has a focus on domestic trade it has the potential to boost trade in the targeted sectors beyond the borders of Pakistan.

GRASP aims at enhancing productivity and profitability of enterprises in and around selected value chains in dairy and horticulture sectors.

GRASP will address issues related to domestic economy by intervening at three levels:

**Macro** level – support to regulatory framework & policies;

**Meso level** – support to institutional capacity building of intermediary institutions; and

**Micro** level - direct interaction with the Business Intermediary Organizations (BIOs) and SMEs in the targeted sectors of value chains, in Balochistan and Sindh.

The two sub- sectors of the programme are **dairy** and **horticulture**. Main interventions of GRASP will include vertical and horizontal development of targeted SMEs clusters; upgradation of value addition along the entire supply chain; increased integration of small producers into supply chains.

Taking into account the impact of the pandemic a Covid-19 strategy has been developed under GRASP that support the vulnerable SMEs and Business (specifically focusing on women) involved in Horticulture and Livestock sectors value chains to meet their livelihood at a fast track (3 to 6 months) under the current epidemic.

Further, the immediate response strategy remaining within the remit of the overall Objectives, has been prepared by holding intensive consultations with the departments of Planning & Development and offices of the Chiefs Foreign Aid of the Government of Sindh and Balochistan, respectively, were involved during the consultation process and provided agreement and full support to this strategy.

I expect the strategy to be of great help to the targeted SMEs in the provinces of Balochistan and Sindh.

The project is implemented by the International Trade Centre in partnership with local and international partners, including Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) as well as local non-profit organisations. .

The International Trade Centre is a joint technical agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation, with global experience of working on SME competitiveness, value chain development and gender inclusive approaches. The International

Trade Centre was partner of our earlier trade related technical assistant programme (TRTA-II), and I am confident that their technical expertise in the core areas of GRASP will be essential to achieve the envisaged objectives of the programme.

***In order to succeed:***

We look forward to the facilitating role of concerned federal and provincial governments. I would like to appreciate the close collaboration with the relevant ministries and departments extended so far in the design of this programme and emphasize that in order to succeed their ownership remains essential.

We look forward to a close working relationship among the main partners, such as Ministry of Commerce, Provincial Planning and Development Departments of Sind and Balochistan, International Trade Centre as well as the private sector.

I would like to encourage all the stakeholders, to actively participate in successive technical/ information sessions and provide your valuable feedback.

At the end, I would like to thank our implementing partners for organising this event. I am confident that the presentation and information in today's event will be productive and useful and will pave the way towards successful implementation of the GRASP programme.

Thank you.