

WELCOME ADDRESS BY
DR RASHID AMJAD, VICE CHANCELLOR P.I.D.E
AND COORDINATOR SANEI, AT THE
NINTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF SANEI
18 – 20 AUGUST, 2008.

**DR. ISHRAT HUSSAIN, CHAIRMAN, SANEI AND FORMER GOVERNOR,
STATE BANK OF PAKISTAN.**

**MR. SOHAIL SAFDAR, SECRETARY, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION,**

**DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE RESEARCH ADVISORY PANEL OF
SANEI,**

PARTICIPANTS FROM SANEI MEMBER INSTITUTES

LADIES AND GENTLEMAN.

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the inauguration of the Ninth Annual Conference of the South Asian Network of Economic Research Institutes (SANEI). An especially warm welcome to our foreign guests who have come both from the region and different parts of the world. I wish you an enjoyable and professionally rewarding stay in Islamabad.

SANEI, whose inception can be traced back to March 1998, is a regional initiative to foster networking and establish strong research interlinkages among economic research institutes in South Asia.

SANEI is the part of the Global Development Network (GDN) set up by the World Bank, as a network of research institutions to influence policy making and work towards bridging the gap between the development of knowledge and policy making. SANEI represents the South Asian region in the seven regions that form this network. The other six being East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, East Europe, former Soviet Union, Middle-East and Northern Africa and Sub – Saharan Africa.

The Indian Council for Research on International Economic Research (ICRIER), based in New Delhi, served as SANEI's nodal point for the first five years.

In 2004, the nodal agency for coordinating the activities of SANEI was shifted to PIDE, the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, for a period of 5 years.

SANEI now has a membership of 54 research institutes in the South Asia region. There are 11 from Bangladesh, 24 from India, 3 from Nepal, 8 from Pakistan and 5 from Sri Lanka. Two more research institutes of Pakistan have applied for membership this year.

SANEI has so far conducted NINE rounds of research on diverse topics which in the Seventh and Eighth Round covered Good Governance, Infrastructure, Financial Sector Reforms and Higher Education.

The thematic focus of the Ninth Round, draft papers of which will be discussed during the Conference is on “South Asian Agriculture Post – Doha”. While the very recent failure of the Doha Round at the WTO negotiations in July 2008 means that full agreement has still not been reached, the papers to be presented will bring out the challenges that the agriculture sector in South Asia will face in an increasingly globalized and competitive world economy. The recent increase in world food prices which we have been witnessing makes these presentations and the discussions on this subject from a regional perspective all the more important.

The thematic focus of the Tenth Round of Research launched this year is on Health for All and Perspectives on Inter / Intra Regional Migration.

SANEI since its inception has conducted research on extremely important and relevant subjects and indeed continues to do so. Papers emerging from this research are available on the SANEI website and have also been published as edited works on the subject.

I also deem it important to inform our guests of how SANEI conducts its research activities to make it both transparent and competitive as well as the mechanisms in place to help strengthen research capacity of member institutes whose proposals are selected for research in each round.

The call for papers in each round, as you may have seen recently is publicized in the press, economic journals, internet including through e-mails sent to research scholars in the region. The amount available for the research study increases propositionally if it covers more than one country and is carried out in collaboration with institutes from the other country or countries. The aim of this is to foster joint and collaborative research amongst research institutes in the region.

The proposals received, and these are not restricted to just member institutes of SANEI though the proposer must belong to a research institute, are then carefully evaluated by a high powered Research Advisory Panel (known as RAP) of internationally renowned economist from South Asia. RAP also review the progress of the selected study and provide expert guidance and comments as you will see at this Conference.

It is privilege to introduce to you Prof. T. N. Srinivasan, from Yale University who is the Chairman of the Research Advisory Panel and Prof. M. Ali Khan, from John Hopkins University who is a distinguished member of this Advisory Panel. Prof. Siddiqur Rahman

Osmani, University of Ulster, U.K will be joining us later this morning. (May I request you to welcome the distinguished Professors with a round of applause).

While most of the sessions at this Conference are dedicated to the papers on the important subject of South Asia Agriculture Post – Doha I would like to draw your attention to the Panel Discussion on “Growth, Employment and Poverty” which will be held tomorrow morning at this auditorium. It will be led by our three distinguished professors namely Prof. Srinivasan, Prof. Ali Khan and Prof. Osmani. You are all requested to attend.

While this panel discussion has been organized to help identify critical issues and prepare a framework for possible selection of this theme for the next i.e. Eleventh Round. In the current economic milieu this topic has become central in the economic debate as in the countries us the region.

The recent global oil and food price shock has once again ignited inflation to very high and unbearable rates and threaten economic growth and can derail measures to reduce poverty and protect the vulnerable groups. A major challenge is to regain fiscal policy balance, dampen inflationary pressures and sustain growth to the extent that the former two objectives allow and most important of all put in place affordable safety nets to protect the poor and vulnerable groups.

All this requires prudent economic management rather than knee-jerk reactions or strong hammer blows without thinking through the consequences which some economic and financial managers sadly resort to during this time.

If SANEI through its research could contribute to this debate it would indeed go a long way in achieving its objective of “bridging the gap between the development of knowledge and policy making”

I thank you all for your patient hearing.