

**Title: Bridging Pakistan and Oceania**  
**Event Date: 17 July 2025**  
**Venue: IFQ Hotel and Resort, Islamabad**  
**Time: 10:00-16:00**

### **Executive summary**

As the world is looking for growing global interconnectivity, Pakistan seeks to expand its engagement with Oceania through collaborative initiatives in tourism, culture, and climate resilience. In this context, CAPS hosted an international hybrid seminar, bringing together scholars, diplomats, and practitioners to foster mutual understanding and explore areas of cooperation. The seminar highlighted the historical and socio-economic commonalities between the two regions and emphasized the urgency of addressing climate challenges amid global interdependence and SDG commitments. Discussions centered on promoting sustainable tourism, branding strategies, and the role of cultural heritage in presenting a positive global image. The forum also addressed shared climate vulnerabilities, disaster risk management, technological integration, and youth engagement as key drivers for climate resilience. Participants emphasized the importance of institutional partnerships, structured frameworks, and people-to-people connections to enhance Pakistan-Oceania relations. The event concluded with a call for sustained collaboration to unlock opportunities in tourism, cultural diplomacy, and climate action.



### **Session highlights**

The seminar featured an inaugural session moderated by Umair Pervez Khan, General Secretary of CAPS, followed by two thematic sessions. The first session, “Promoting Sustainable Tourism,” was chaired by Ambassador Naela Chohan, Pakistan’s former envoy to Australia, and moderated by Dr. Gulshan Rafiq, Chief Organizer and Assistant Professor at NUST. The second session, “Beyond Borders: Shared Climate Stories and Solutions from Pakistan and Oceania,” was also chaired by Ambassador Naela Chohan, focusing on climate resilience and collaborative strategies.

The inaugural session began with a welcome note from Dr. Khuram Iqbal, President of CAPS, who emphasized the importance of strengthening Pakistan-Oceania relations in the era of global interdependence. Dr. Khuram Iqbal greeted the participants and highlighted CAPS's mission to combat blindness in the Asia-Pacific region in Pakistan. He underscored Pakistan's growing diplomatic engagement with Pacific Island nations and its commitment to building partnerships grounded in geo-economics and South-South cooperation rather than geopolitical competition. He emphasized tourism and climate resilience as priority areas, citing Pakistan's rich cultural heritage and Oceania's expanding travel market as opportunities for mutual growth.

**Dr. Isimeli Waibuta Tagicakiverata**, Pro-Vice Chancellor at Fiji National University, discussed the historical and cultural similarities between Pakistan and Fiji, including colonial legacies, agricultural practices, economic structures, and tropical climates. Looking toward 2030 and the upcoming SDG deadlines, he emphasized the urgent need to address the impacts of climate change. He called for greater collaboration in security efforts, disaster management, and sports diplomacy, highlighting that Fiji can learn valuable lessons from Pakistan's experiences. Additionally, Dr. Isimeli emphasized the need to explore economic opportunities between Pakistan and Papua New Guinea, as both countries face similar economic challenges.

**Asaf Javed Chaudhry** from Samsons Group of Companies on tourism development in Swat, highlighted that the tourist experience has been repositioned and is now termed 'from hidden gems to global tourist destination. He highlighted the role of the private sector in the tourism sector. Further, he underscored that Swat has long outgrown the slogan "from Terrorism to Tourism." And the valley is celebrated for its Snow-capped peaks, Emerald rivers, Buddhist relics, and a Thriving, Sustainable tourist economy.

**Dr. Waqas Saleem**, Executive Director at LOK VIRSA, emphasized the potential of heritage tourism along with intangible cultural heritage. He stresses the role of institutions like Lok Virsa in promoting Pakistan's soft image globally. He mentioned the efforts taken to preserve the aging musical instrument by the Heritage Center. He highlighted the economic potential of cultural heritage, job creation, and its role in nation-building and national confidence.

**Dr. Irram Waheed** from NUST discussed branding strategies for tourism promotion. She spoke about the role of linguistics and the power of storytelling in branding Pakistan's tourism industry. She emphasized that effective branding is crucial for correcting misconceptions, highlighting unique tourism offerings, creating a consistent and memorable identity, and boosting economic and social development. Further, she identified several key missed opportunities, including the absence of a cohesive national tourism brand, weak digital presence, and a lack of participation in international travel shows and events. She outlined six strategic branding pillars essential for this transformation: Hospitality, Authenticity, Sustainability, Spiritual and Historical Depth, Diversity, and Safety.

**Naomi Wambea** from Papua New Guinea participated online to share insights on sustainable tourism practices in Oceania. She discussed the untapped potential of PNG's tourism sector, which is hindered by a lack of infrastructure, capacity, and training. PNG, acknowledging these

challenges, has begun investing in youth and engaging NGOs to promote responsible and sustainable tourism.

**Sardar Bakhsh**, in house speaker, emphasized on the historical role played by climate change in the region of South Asia and linked it with current changing weather patterns and its impacts on Pakistan. Secondly, Asia-Pacific region is home to two global weather phenomenon of El Nino and La Nina. So, it impacts the weather systems of all other regions including South Asia. He also emphasized on common destiny of Pakistan and Oceania region amid climate change which required both regions to cooperate with each other. Few of the points of convergence for both regions are climate finance, climate justice, climate mitigation, climate adaptation and climate resilient infrastructure. He concluded by emphasizing Pakistan and Oceania can become raise voice on the behalf of countries of global south whose carbon emission is almost negligible.

**Ms. Sheeba Tariq** outlined the shared vulnerabilities of both regions to natural disasters and proposed innovative strategies to enhance resilience. She highlighted Pakistan's significant vulnerability to disasters, ranking it as the eighth most susceptible country to long-term climate risks. She discussed innovations in disaster risk financing, emphasizing tools designed to improve governments' financial response capacities to natural disasters. She also focused on the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in disaster management, including algorithms that can optimize resource delivery in complex situations, predict volcanic eruptions and landslides using seismic and geological data, and improve the accuracy and efficiency of flood and earthquake predictions.

**Junior Yama**, from Papua New Guinea, highlighted the vulnerability of Pacific nations to climate change. He mentioned Papua New Guinea as the frontline of climate risk that is accelerating the food security challenge. He discussed the climate pattern, noting that it has put the natural resources under threat. He discussed the initiative to tackle climate change by PNG youth, from plantation drives to social media campaigns. He also addressed the challenges in the climate mitigation efforts, like logistic connectivity barriers, limited resources, and policy barriers

**Yuhan Zheng** from the University of Ireland discussed the idea of connecting the unconnected through technology and encouraging local startups in various fields, including engineering, to address climate challenges.

Both sessions concluded with lively Q&A exchanges, during which participants emphasized the need for building structured frameworks for tourism collaboration, cultural exchanges, and joint climate initiatives. group photos marked the end of each segment.

General Secretary CAPS **Umair Pervez Khan**, while offering a vote of thanks, reiterated CAPS's commitment to fostering dialogue and building sustainable partnerships between Pakistan and Oceania, with a focus on tourism, culture, and climate resilience. He called for actions to connect Pakistan and the Oceania region to gain maximum benefits.

## **Recommendation**

- The establishment of a Destination Branding Authority, a collaborative public-private board.
- The crafting of a comprehensive National Branding Campaign complete with a compelling tagline, distinctive logo, and clear vision.
- Significant investment in Influencer Collaborations and Storytelling to leverage authentic voices.
- The creation of a Consistent Narrative across all digital platforms, including official websites, Instagram, and YouTube.
- Actively Engaging Local Communities as Brand Ambassadors, empowering them to share their unique stories and hospitality.
- Joint development of forecasting models, exchange of data on weather patterns and seismic activity, and standardization of communication protocols.
- Training programs for disaster managers focusing on risk assessment and emergency response, and simulations and drills to improve preparedness for large-scale disasters.
- Sharing best practices in humanitarian assistance and long-term recovery planning to address social, economic, and environmental impacts.
- Collaboration on cyclone and flood management, earthquake preparedness (seismic monitoring and public awareness), and tsunami preparedness for coastal regions.
- Sharing expertise through personnel exchange programs.
- Learning from the Indonesia's program of sea walling to protect its coastal cities.
- Pushing global north for contributing more to their commitments of climate finance.

## Conclusion

Ambassador Naela Chohan concluded the sessions by summarizing key points of speakers. She emphasized the untapped potential of Pakistan's tourism sector and its alignment with Oceania's emerging travel market. She reemphasized the speaker's points of importance of cultural heritage, effective branding, and the private sector's role in reimagining Pakistan's image from a terrorism hit country to a vibrant tourist destination. Insights from both Pakistani and Oceanic participants highlighted the need for strategic storytelling, digital presence, and community-led tourism to foster sustainable and inclusive growth. She concluded this session by recommending a separated media channel which can project the positive image and tourism destination of Pakistan to world.

In the second session, the shared climate vulnerabilities of Pakistan and Oceania, particularly in the face of El Niño, La Niña, and rising natural disasters were highlightd. Participants called for deeper cooperation on climate finance, disaster risk reduction, and technological integration. The session featured innovative strategies like AI-powered forecasting, youth-led environmental activism, and community resilience building. Both regions were encouraged to champion the voice of the Global South on climate justice, pushing for equitable contributions from the Global North and emphasizing collaborative adaptation and mitigation measures. However, institutional capacity building and governance improvement at national level were believed to be key in countering climate change.