

## **BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND THE PROTECTION OF WILDLIFE IN THE PROVINCE OF KHYBER PAKHUNKHWA**

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### **Abstract**

*This article analyses the law of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on biodiversity and wildlife. The analyses are made on the touch stone of international conventions and the national polices which are made by the Federal Government from time to time. An attempt has been to locate issue in the law on biodiversity and wildlife of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and make recommendations for protection of wildlife and biodiversity as essential component of environment.*

**Keywords:** Biological diversity, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Act, environment, international conventions on the protection of animals and plants.

### **Introduction**

This article analyses the law of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on biodiversity and wildlife. The analyses are made on the touch stone of international conventions and the national polices which are made by the Federal Government from time to time. An attempt has been to locate issue in the law on biodiversity and wildlife of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and make recommendations for protection of wildlife and biodiversity as essential component of environment.

The international conventions related to wildlife and biodiversity are discussed for understanding nature of obligations mentioned in such conventions on protection and conservation of wildlife and biodiversity. The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance as Waterfowl Habitat, famously called the Ramsar Convention is one of important conventions which has mentioned obligations related to protection of wildlife and biodiversity. The Convention is ratified by Pakistan in 1976.<sup>1</sup> The state parties under the Convention are required to enlist wetlands in their territorial jurisdictions.<sup>2</sup> Wetlands means areas of marsh, fen, peat land or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters.<sup>3</sup> It is obligatory on state parties to promote conservation of wetlands and conduct research and training related to protection of wetlands.<sup>4</sup>

Pakistan has an area of wetland that covers 9.7 percent of the total land area, and 225 nationally significant wetlands of where 19 sites are listed under the

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Ramsar Convention, 2 of such listed wetlands are situated in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.<sup>5</sup>

Pakistan, as given above, has ratified the Convention and, therefore, is under duty to take steps for protection of wetlands. Pakistan has come up with a National Wetland Policy in,2009, however, the said Policy has not yet been approved by the Cabinet and serves as a draft. The Policy has stressed the importance of wetlands a source of livelihood of rural communities through agriculture, grazing and fisheries, its useful for flood control, soil erosion, regulating water availability, local climate moderator, ecosystem and serves as habitat for wildlife.<sup>6</sup> National Wetlands Policy (Draft), 2009, has pinpointed poverty, lack of knowledge and poor management as reasons of degradation of wetlands in the country.<sup>7</sup>It has stressed for laws and policy for better protection of the wetlands.<sup>8</sup>

The subject which needs to be considered in light of the above said Convention include legislation on wetlands, forest, irrigation, rivers, wildlife, agriculture,ecology, dams, lakes, parks, sanctuaries and mangroves. These subjects are located in the Provincial legislative jurisdictions and the Federal Government may only make recommendations through National Policy.<sup>9</sup>

The Government of Pakistan has ratified the Convention on International Trade In Endangered Species Of Wild Fauna And Flora (CITES), 1973, in April 1976.<sup>10</sup> The CITES is focused on the regulation of trade in endangered species of wild flora and fauna to protect such endangered species.<sup>11</sup>

Under the Convention the state parties are required to regulate international trade in endangered species through system of export and import licenses with certain condition of preserving the endangered species.<sup>12</sup>

Pakistan, as referred above, has ratified the Convention on International Trade In Endangered Species and is, therefore, bound to make compliance of the commitments given in the said Convention. The Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, gives power to the Federal Government to deal with matters related to import and export, trade and commerce with foreign countries.<sup>13</sup> The Federal Government is, legally and constitutionally, competent to comply and implement the provisions of CITES.

Pakistan is under obligation of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals 1979 (CMS), as it has been ratified by the Government 1987.<sup>14</sup> CMS, which is also called Bonn Convention, has placed wild animals as part of the natural system where it is important to protect and exploit such animals in accordance with the principle of intergenerational equity.<sup>15</sup> The state parties are have the responsibility to protect wild animals,

which migrates from one state to another, and also to take special measures for endangered species.<sup>16</sup>

Since, Pakistan has ratified the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animal, 1979, and is therefore, has to take steps in accordance with provisions of the said Convention. The items in relation to the Convention which requires legislation include protection of national parks, prohibition and regulation of hunting, fishing and fisheries, wild animals and birds, forests, wetlands, protection of rangelands and rivers.

Pakistan is bound by the provisions of the Biological Diversity Convention (CBD) after its ratification in 1994.<sup>17</sup> Biological diversity, under the said convention means the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this include diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.<sup>18</sup> Under the Convention states have the responsibility to identify biological diversity within their territory and to take measures for its conservation and also take account of biological resources in national decision making.<sup>19</sup>

In a broad sense, the Convention aims at the protection and conservation of all forms of life systems, including plants, animals and their habitats. Since, Pakistan has ratified the Convention and is bound to come up with plans, strategies and laws to protect animals and plants.

There are two supplemental protocols to the Convention, namely; Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, 2000, and Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization, 2011. Purpose of the Cartagena Protocol is to regulating the trade and safety of biotechnology in meeting the needs for food, agriculture and human health.<sup>20</sup> Nagoya Protocol is related with access of genetic resources and transparency of contractual obligations between provider of resource and utilizers.<sup>21</sup> State parties to the Nagoya Protocol are requires to take measures including legislative and administrative to ensure that genetic resources and knowledge associated with it and which is held by indigenous communities are shared in a fair and equitable manner on mutually agreed terms.<sup>22</sup> Pakistan is party to the Cartagena Protocol by ratification in 2009.<sup>23</sup> However, the Nagoya Protocol has not been ratified by Pakistan so far.

The items of legislation to comply with the above referred four conventions at domestic level include wildlife, rivers, fishery, forest, wetlands, agriculture, trade in animals and birds.

Pakistan through its various National Policies, Strategies and Action Plans has made references to commitments of the above referred items, which include , the National Conservation Strategy, the Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy, the National Wetland Policy, Biodiversity Action Plan, National Forestry Policy, National Environmental Policy, National Climate Change Policy. The Biodiversity Action Plan has shown areas of different sectors which need review to protect and conserve biodiversity and wild animals and birds in the country.<sup>24</sup>

National Conservation Strategy was adopted in 1992, which speaks for the protection of natural resources including forest, fisheries, and water bodies, and animals.<sup>25</sup> The Strategy has pressed the importance of biodiversity and has shown areas which require attention, such areas are spread over promotion of pest management, development of national parks, wetlands and game reserves.<sup>26</sup>

The Government of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has approved the Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy in 1996.<sup>27</sup> The Strategy has shown some sectors such as the variety of animals, plants and their habitat which are important to biodiversity protection in the Province.<sup>28</sup> The Strategy has mentioned that out of 18 habitats 12 are found in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, however, such habitats require specific attention for their protection.<sup>29</sup> Biodiversity and animals are threaten by factors such as irregular hunting, pollution, deforestation, habitat destruction, poor land management, soil erosion, floods, over grazing, poverty, population increase and desertification.<sup>30</sup>

The National Environmental Policy, 2005, is an important document which apart from other environmental factors has focused biodiversity and protection of animal and their habitats, and has suggested steps for protection of biodiversity and management of protected areas.<sup>31</sup> It has asked to develop new parks and protected areas, with support of local community, and to come up with plans for biodiversity conservation.<sup>32</sup>

The Biodiversity Action Plan, 1999, has included in its aims development of policies and legal framework for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, promotion of national biodiversity programs with help of local population.<sup>33</sup> The Action Plan has pinpointed deficiencies in the existing legal system, and suggested review of laws to incorporate protection of biodiversity.<sup>34</sup> It has recommended enhancing capacity of local government laws in order to protect biodiversity, and asks for reforming existing laws related to natural resource management.<sup>35</sup>

The National Forest Policy 2015, referring to biodiversity and ecological systems, has included as objectives the establishment and management of protected areas.<sup>36</sup>The Policy considers establishment of ecological and biological corridors throughout the Pakistan-China Economic Corridors.<sup>37</sup> The Policy has pressed the importance of forest and considers forest as an abode to wildlife and support biodiversity, and, therefore, has emphasized an integrated approach towards protection of wildlife, forests and biodiversity.<sup>38</sup>

The National Wetlands Policy (Draft), 2009, has addressed importance of wetlands, and suggested measures for protection of wetlands as wetlands are important to ecosystem and biodiversity.<sup>39</sup>there are important varieties of wetlands in Pakistan which include alpine wetland, wetlands on streams and rivers, mangroves, estuaries and beaches.<sup>40</sup>The Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa contains alpine, stream and river wetlands.

The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has legislated the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife and Biodiversity (Protection, Preservation, Conservation and Management) Act, 2015. The Act is a basic document related to protection of wildlife and protected areas in the Province.<sup>41</sup>Purpose of the document is given in the following lines.<sup>42</sup>

1. Management of wild animals and their habitats,
2. Measures for protected areas,
3. Compliance of the obligations under the biodiversity and wildlife related international conventions which are ratified by the government,
4. Awareness regarding value and relevance of wildlife to environment; and
5. Protection of biological diversity through help of local community and sustainable use.

The Act has established the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife and Biodiversity Board, which is responsible to advise the Provincial Government on policy matters relating to protection of wildlife in the Province.<sup>43</sup>

Biodiversity and Wildlife Fund has been established, which is to be utilized for the following purposes.<sup>44</sup>

1. Development of national parks and protected areas,
2. Awareness and education regarding biodiversity,
3. Payment of cost of fighting forest fire and natural calamities,
4. Development of the Wildlife Department, and
5. Financing projects related to development and improvement of protected areas,

The Act has penalized a number of acts which includes following.<sup>45</sup>

1. Hunting of wild animals,
2. Using or possession any net, snare, hook, or like devices for the purpose of hunting a game animal,

3. Using or having in possession any device of electrocuting any wild animal or electrifying any part of its habitat including water bodies, roosting and nesting places,
4. Using or having in possession any poison for killing any wild animal or poisoning its food and water or part of any terrestrial or aquatic habitat,
5. Using vehicle of any type to pursue any wild animal or to drive or stampede any wild animal for any purpose whatsoever,
6. Hooting any game animal from any conveyance, and
7. Hunting with the help of playback recorded calls.

The Provincial Government is given power under the Act to certain areas as protected, which includes wildlife sanctuary, site of special scientific interest, wildlife refuge, national park, biosphere reserve, national natural heritage site, and game reserve.<sup>46</sup>

Some of the migratory species of birds which includes water birds, falcons, sand grouse and bastards get through the area of the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.<sup>47</sup> The birds such as Monal Phasants and Western Horned Tragopan, which are listed under to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, 1973, are also found in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.<sup>48</sup> Some of the animals such Black Bears, Leopards, Ibex, Snow Leopards, Markhor Grey Goral also reside in the Province.<sup>49</sup> Some areas of the Province such as the districts of Lucki Marwat, Bannu and Karak are identified for hunting of migratory birds from Siberia such as Russian doves Houbara Bustards and falcons, and such birds are sold in trade.<sup>50</sup> There are reports of Houbara Bustard being smuggled to some of the Arab states.<sup>51</sup> There are also reports that soft shell turtle and hard shell turtles which can be found in the rivers and canals of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which are hunted and smuggled to China.<sup>52</sup>

The Province contains beautiful lakes, parks and wetland such as Chitral Gol National Park, Sheikh Badin National Park, Saiful Maluk National Park, Lolusar Valley National Park, Broghal Yarkhun Lake, Barani Dam, Chashma Lake (wildlife sanctuary), Dodibagh Sar Lake, Gandial Dam, Indus Game Reserve (Game Reserve), Indus Water Fowl Refuge (Wildlife Refuge), Kandar Dam, Khanpur Dam, Kheshki Reservoir, Shandur Lake, Mahodand Lake, Tarbela Dam and Zebi Dam.<sup>53</sup> The Thanedarwala and Tanda Dam, which are listed under the Ramsar Convention, are located in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.<sup>54</sup>

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Biodiversity (Protection, Preservation, Conservation and Management) Act, 2015, as given above, is the sole piece of legislation dealing protection, conservation and management of wildlife, lakes, parks and wetlands in the Province. The Act has made reference to relevant international environmental conventions. The Act has authorized the Provincial

Government to regulate or prohibit trade of wild fauna and flora in accordance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), 1973, and Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), 1979, and such other relevant conventions which are by the Federal Government.<sup>55</sup>

The Act has prohibited the import and export of endangered flora and fauna except under a license or permit and No Objections Certificate of import and export issued by the CITES Management Authority.<sup>56</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife and Biodiversity (Protection, Preservation, Conservation and Management) Act, 2015, has made progress in comparison to the previous Act of 1975, and has referred to international environmental conventions such as CBD, CITES and CMS. However, no operative provisions in detail are not given, particularly, protection of wetlands. The Act has failed to appreciate in appropriate manner the role of local community in the protection of wildlife. The Act also failed to come up with integrative concept, where such integrative concept has been stressed by various policies of Governments. Wildlife, fisheries and forest laws are required to incorporate integrative concepts which are important to management of natural resources. The Act has given overruling authority to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Forest Ordinance, 2002, despite the fact that provision related to offences of hunting are more detailed in the Act. in comparison to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Forest Ordinance, 2002. It is also to mention that the punitive measures and prohibited acts given in the Act are focused on hunting of animals and birds, however, effective measures for the protection of flora are ignored.

It is to bring in notice that the offences under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Forest Ordinance, 2002, are to be tried in the Court of Forest Magistrate including cases of hunting and fishing in the forests, while the offences under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife and Biodiversity (Protection, Preservation, Conservation and Management) Act, 2015, offences of hunting of wildlife are to be tried by ordinary Magistrates, which is an evidence of the lack of integration between the two legislative pieces. An illegal act of hunting of wild animals will be deferent, in terms of punishment and trial, from the one which is committed outside forest territory. This lack of coherence will be detrimental to protection of wild flora and fauna.

In order to protect wildlife and biodiversity the relevant laws in sectors shall be amended in accordance with the national policies and international conventions which has been ratified by the Government. The law on biodiversity and wildlife shall effectively encompass the integrative concept of management, and the gaps and overlaps between laws in sectors relevant to each shall be removed for better management of natural resources and protection of environment.

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