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URAAN PAKISTAN: Empowering Youth through Skills, Innovation and Opportunities for a Sustainable Future

Plenary Session Concept Note

Data as a Catalyst for National Transformation: setting the Stage for DataFest 2025

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Background

To highlight the achievements, opportunities, and future pathways of URAN Pakistan, a panel discussion is being organized, bringing together policymakers, development experts, academia, youth leaders, and private sector representatives.

This panel discussion, titled "**URAAN**" (meaning 'flight' or 'ascension'), is conceived as the preliminary or plenary session for DataFest 2025. Its primary purpose is to set a forward-looking, inspirational, and strategic tone for the entire event, moving the discourse beyond mere data collection to focus on innovation, impact, and the transformative potential of data in achieving national development goals in Pakistan.

The session will serve as a high-level dialogue, which are proven Globally, in mobilizing political will, engaging with youth and fostering innovation ecosystem, that bridges the strategic vision of national leadership with the operational realities and technological opportunities present in Pakistan's evolving data ecosystem. It aims to generate actionable insights and foster a collaborative environment among policymakers, technologists, and data users.

Objectives

- **Set the strategic direction** for DataFest 2025 by framing the role of data in Pakistan's development.
- **Highlight innovation and youth engagement** as central drivers of a data-driven economy.
- **Showcase global best practices** and contextualize them for Pakistan through prism of 5 Es.
- **Launch commitments and challenges** that subsequent panels will operationalize.

Session Format (60 minutes)

- 1. Introduction (2 min)**
 - Dr. Bahrawar Jan, DDG, PBS
- 2. Welcome & Opening Remarks (8 min)**
 - Dr. Naeem uz Zafar, Chief Statistician, PBS
- 3. Keynote : Data for National Transformation, youth, innovation and future of data (10 min)**
 - Prof Ahsan Iqbal, Minister of PD&SI
- 4. High-Level Panel Discussion (30 min)**
 - Moderator-led discussion with 5–6 panellists as given in table below.
 - Focus: governance, financing, skills, and innovation ecosystems.

5. Audience Q&A

(10 min)

- Three challenges announced:
 - *Policy Challenge*: Sustainability and consistency of this policy document
 - *Innovation Challenge*: management of it cross sectoral development at the same time for example benefit for citizens, youth-led prototype for disaster risk or poverty mapping
 - *Provincial commitments*: All provinces need to be politically committed to achieve the goals of URAAN Plan

Expected Outcomes

- **6–10 concrete commitments** from panellists (policy actions, pilots, partnerships).
- **Follow-up working group** to track progress and integrate outcomes into national data strategy.

Linkages to Thematic Panels

- **Environment**: Disaster risk dashboards, climate vulnerability mapping.
- **Economy**: Data-driven investment planning, productivity analytics.
- **Social Equity**: Education, health, and poverty targeting through integrated data.
- **E-Pakistan**: AI pilots, interoperability protocols, and sandbox initiatives.

Lessons from Global Practice

- **UN World Data Forum**: Plenaries emphasize multi-stakeholder commitments and global-local linkages.
- **Scotland's DataFest**: Youth and start-ups are central, with hackathons feeding into plenary outcomes.
- **OECD Data Summits**: Focus on governance, interoperability, and ethical use of data.

URAAN Pakistan's plenary could adopt these best practices while tailoring them to Pakistan's context, ensuring that DataFest 2025 is not only a dialogue but also a launch-pad for **actionable, measurable, and youth-driven outcomes**.