

APP

### **Sindh, Balochistan, GRASP to strengthen SMEs: Razak**

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Prime Minister for Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood said Thursday that the Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP) had come at the most appropriate time when Pakistan was geared toward finalization of SME Policy.

Speaking to the participants of first stakeholders' consultation for GRASP, the Advisor said that the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) make up the bulk of businesses in Pakistan, hence in order to achieve coherent, broad-based and sustainable economic growth there was a need to focus on SMEs and unlock the potential in livestock and horticulture besides other sectors in the country.

He also appreciated European Union's support for Pakistan development especially through GSP-plus and various other development programs.

The Advisor underlined that GRASP would strengthen SMEs in the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan which are associated with livestock, dairy and horticulture.

He also emphasised that livestock, dairy and horticulture – which account for 70% of value-added agriculture – have particularly strong potential for growth, climate adaptation and increased participation of women. "SMEs in these sectors, face major challenges," he added.

Milko Van Gool, Head of Development Cooperation of the EU in Pakistan said 'GRASP aligns with the rural development and economic cooperation initiatives of the EU in Pakistan as it would help SMEs in horticulture, livestock and dairy sectors become more competitive by making improvements at all levels of the value chains.

These consultations would help in adapting to the federal and provincial context in Pakistan for maximum impact on the lives of people in Sindh and Baluchistan, he further highlighted.

Robert Skidmore, Chief, Sector and Enterprise Competitiveness International Trade Centre (ITC) highlighted the contributions of development partners would help in achieving a measurable reduction in poverty and increase in economic growth in addition to creation of more job opportunities in the country.

Olivier Marty Lead Inception Phase ITC and Owais Khan Representative of ITC in Pakistan were also present. The nine-month inception phase of the project began in June 2019. This project is funded by EU in Pakistan and is implemented by ITC.