



## External Relations Department

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### **Governor SBP apprises President Arif Alvi on measures for Differently Abled persons**

His Excellency President Islamic Republic of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi visited State Bank of Pakistan today for a Roundtable Discussion on Financial Inclusion of Differently Abled Persons hosted by Governor State Bank of Pakistan, Dr. Reza Baqir. Senior officials of SBP, Presidents and CEOs of Banks and representatives of Network of Organizations Working for People with Disabilities, Pakistan (NOWPDP) also participated in this roundtable discussion.

Governor SBP, Dr. Reza Baqir welcomed the President and gave a detailed presentation on the two types of interventions by SBP for the differently abled persons. These include initiatives taken by SBP to facilitate the differently abled persons for accessing banking premises and services and, providing access to finance through various SBP refinance schemes. He informed the President about the regulatory instructions for the banks by SBP and its own initiatives to address the problems faced by different categories of differently abled persons and their progress since 2018.

For people faced with challenges related to upper and lower limb, Governor shared with the President that various steps have been taken to facilitate them including providing preferential treatment/out of queue assistance; construction of ramps at the entrance of existing branches and ATM cabins to allow easy access to special persons and wheelchair users; relaxation in the requirement of biometric verification for account opening; and facilitation desks for special persons at SBP main building and its offices countrywide. Regarding steps taken by SBP to facilitate persons with visual impairment, Governor SBP informed the President about the special features of currency notes such as size, lines & dots; installation of Talking ATMs; provision of ATM/Debit and internet banking facilities; and countrywide awareness sessions on features of currency notes.

With respect to the second type of SBP interventions, Dr. Baqir apprised the President about two credit schemes supported by SBP for the financial inclusion of differently abled persons. The first is the Small Enterprise Financing and Credit Guarantee Scheme, which is available to differently abled persons holding CNIC with a special logo/symbol for setting up new business enterprises or for expansion of existing ones at a subsidized financing rate of 5% per annum for the tenor of 5 years including grace period of up to 6 months. The second SBP scheme is Financing Facility of Low Cost Housing for Special Segments including differently abled persons that provides subsidized loans to widows, children of Shaheed, transgender, special persons and persons in the areas severely affected by war against terrorism. Under the scheme, special segments can avail subsidized financing at 5% per annum, for the tenor of 12.5 years including grace period of up to 6 months. Information about these schemes is available SBP website (<http://www.sbp.org.pk/Incen-others/sme-7.asp> and <http://www.sbp.org.pk/Incen-others/Low.asp>).

Elaborating the way forward, the Governor said that SBP would undertake annual accessibility audit under the already issued guidelines for facilitation of differently abled persons to enhance the compliance on our instructions. He went on to add that SBP will issue circular to banks to ensure accessibility facilities for differently abled persons at all new branch premises and ATM cabins. SBP will also issue circular to banks to make available forms/terms & condition document in braille for basic banking services.

The Governor said that SBP would set credit targets for banks under relevant SBP's refinance schemes for differently abled persons by 31 March 2020. SBP's financial literacy program will contain special modules for differently abled persons. He added that banks are encouraged to provide access to internet banking, debit and credit cards to visually impaired literate persons.

The Honorable President, Mr. Arif Alvi, appreciated the initiatives taken by SBP for the differently abled persons and the way forward suggested by the Governor SBP to progress further in this regard. He urged the banking sector to come up with some innovative workable ideas and plans to economically empower this particular segment of society, particularly the women among them. Further, he urged the banks to play their role in training and capacity building, apart from making efforts in provision of financial services and access to finance for differently abled persons.

In the end, the Governor thanked the Honorable President for his visit of SBP and his keen interest for facilitating the differently abled persons through banking services and assured him that SBP will continue to work in this regard along with banking sector.

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