

## Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development – Neil Gray

### Briefing for meeting with Anum Qaisar MP on Pakistan Floods

<b>What</b>	Anum Qaisar has requested this meeting to discuss the flooding in Pakistan and the SG response.
<b>Where</b>	MS Teams: {Inoperative teams link redacted}
<b>When</b>	6 October, 11.00 – 11.30
<b>Key Message(s)</b>	The flooding in Pakistan is horrific and the scale of the devastation caused by the rains is truly overwhelming. As an immediate response, I made available £500,000 in humanitarian relief funding which is in addition to the Scottish Taxpayers contribution to the £16.5M of relief funding announced by the UK Government.
<b>Who</b>	Anum Qaisar is SNP MP for Airdrie and Shotts and has been since May 2021. She is a member of the APPG for Cyprus.
<b>Why</b>	An opportunity to reassure Anum Qaisar MP the SG remains supportive of the Scottish Pakistani community and others in everything they are doing to raise funds to help those affected by the recent flooding in Pakistan.  MiCase Reference: 202200318410
<b>Supporting official</b>	{Redacted}
<b>Briefing contents</b>	<b>Annex A:</b> Event programme <b>Annex B:</b> Guest List/Attendees <b>Annex C:</b> Top Brief and Background on Scholarships for Young Women and Girls in Pakistan
<b>Media Handling</b>	None
<b>Social Media</b>	None

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Annexes A & B

#### Event Programme

11.00 – 11.30 Virtual Teams Meeting

#### Attendees

**Anum Qaisar**, previously **Anum Qaisar-Javed** (born 11 September 1992) is a SNP politician serving as the MP for Airdrie and Shotts since 2021.

Qaisar was born to a Scottish Pakistani family, and raised in Motherwell, where her parents were shopkeepers. Her grandfather had immigrated to Manchester in the 1960s.

She described her first experience of racism aged nine, when she was waiting at a bus stop after school on the day after the 9/11 attacks in New York, her ninth birthday, and was asked, "Why is your skin colour the same colour as mud, as poo? Is your dad a terrorist?"

She studied politics at the University of Stirling and married a doctor.

Born in Scotland and brought up in a Labour-supporting family, Qaisar was an active member of Scottish Labour and became general secretary of Muslim Friends of Labour. She campaigned for a "Yes" vote in the 2014 Independence Referendum, and after that defeat she left Labour and joined the SNP.

Qaisar later worked a parliamentary researcher for Carol Monaghan MP, and as a case-worker for Scottish Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf.

Before becoming an MP, she was a modern studies teacher at Boroughmuir High School and George Watson's College in Edinburgh, the latter where pupils' parents pay fees of up to £13,551 a year. She taught her students about why people from minority communities are under-represented in politics, such as a lack of role models.

In April 2021, Qaisar was selected as the SNP candidate for the 2021 Airdrie and Shotts by-election. Minister Gray is well aware of why the by-election was called.

On 14 May 2021, Qaisar won the election, becoming Scotland's second female Muslim MP after Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh. Turnout was an unusually low 34.3%, and while Qaisar increased the SNP's share of the vote, her majority of 1,757 votes (8.0%) was lower than her predecessor had won at the 2019 UK general election.

After her victory, Qaisar pledged to be a role model for other minorities and to "fight for independence".

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**Annex C**

#### **Timeline**

**20 Sep:** Death toll increases to 1,500 people with a further 12,700 injured. Huge areas of agricultural land affected, with crops swept away and 900,000 livestock killed, which will mean many people going hungry in the longer term. There is also a high risk from water-borne diseases spreading in affected areas.

**2 Sep:** SG announces £0.5m in humanitarian assistance for Pakistan flood victims, split between the DEC and Scotland's own Humanitarian Emergency Fund panel members.

**1 Sep:** UK G announces a further £15M funding for Pakistan taking the total contribution to £16.5M, split between the DEC and international agencies already on the ground.

**30 Aug:** Media reports of devastating floods in Pakistan, with 33m people, including approx 16m children, affected and 1/3 of the country under water.

#### **Top Brief – Pakistan Floods**

The scenes we have witnessed from Pakistan are heart breaking.

- We are all shocked by the devastating effects of the floods, especially with children reported to be the most vulnerable, accounting for around 1/3 of the total deaths reported so far.
- All of those directly affected, and their families and friends, are very much in the thoughts of the Scottish Government and the people of Scotland.

The Scottish Government has made £500,000 of funding available to be split between the Disasters Emergency Committee and the Humanitarian Emergency Fund.

It is vital that we stand in solidarity with Pakistan, its people, and the diaspora community during this crisis.

- We are working with the Pakistani community to ensure that we provide consistent messaging on how they might best assist the people of Pakistan during this time.
- I met with the Pakistan Consul General in Glasgow on Wednesday 7 September to hear first-hand the situation on the ground, and to offer Scotland's support.

#### **Climate Change**

This is a clear example of loss and damage caused by climate change, further underlining the urgent need for global action.

#### **Potential Contentious Issue**

The Scottish Pakistani community feel the tragic flooding in Pakistan has been neglected by the media who quickly moved on from the story following the death of the Queen. They feel as a result, the DEC appeal for Pakistan (£25M) has suffered and been overlooked. It has not raised as much money as the recent appeals for Ukraine (£260M) or Afghanistan (£50M). Anum Qaisar may ask for more financial support from SG which will be very difficult to provide in current financial

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circumstances. Alternatively, she may ask for Minister Gray or the First Minister to publicly support fund raising activities in Scotland which should be possible pending diary commitments.

#### Background on Scholarships for Young Women and Girls in Pakistan

*Scotland Pakistan Scholarships for Young Women and Girls* funds graduate studies for Pakistani women in any Higher Education Commission recognised university across Pakistan. This scholarship is also offered to young girls at secondary school level (grades 8-12) providing underprivileged girls at secondary level with scholarships, ensuring that their education is not hindered due to financial constraints – an issue that is faced by majority of the girls in Pakistan.

At the **Higher Education** level, Scotland Pakistan Scholarships for Young Women and Girls provide scholarships in the fields of:

- Education
- Sustainable energy
- Agriculture and food security
- Health sciences
- STEM education (*only applicable at Master's level*)

The Scholarship programme is fully inclusive, aimed as it is at young women and girls from the disadvantaged backgrounds. A quota has also been set for girls belonging to minority groups and girls with disabilities.

At the **school** level, a 20% minority and 20% disadvantaged quota has been set. At the **university** level, a 10% quota has been set for minority and disability groups.

Since the scholarships were first launched in 2013, over **1,400 young women** in the **universities** stream have benefitted from the Scotland Pakistan Scholarship Scheme across Pakistan. In the **schools'** stream over **13,000 school children** have been supported.

#### Importance of the scholarships

In spite of efforts from various stakeholders in Pakistan – government, multilateral and bilateral organisations, INGOs, CSOs etc – patterns of gender exclusion remain evident across all provinces and sub-sectors of education in Pakistan, with the poorest females at the greatest risk.

Recent Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) data shows that out of the 19% of out-of-school children aged 6-16, 11 % are girls. Moreover, the results further reveal that socio-economic background influences gender inequity. The richest quartile has the highest percentage of children enrolled (80%) whereas the poorest quartile has the lowest enrolment rate (61%).

For the girls who do succeed in attaining primary and secondary education, moving to higher education becomes a challenge, particularly for those who live in rural areas or in regions where women are discouraged from pursuing higher education.

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UNESCO reports an enrolment rate of 71% at primary level, a figure which alarmingly falls to 9.04% at higher education level.

Even though it is the responsibility of the Pakistan Government to provide its citizens with quality free education, on account of inefficient resource allocation and limited funding, the government is unable to fully meet the demand for education. These scholarships make education more affordable, allowing parents to continue their daughter's education without experiencing further financial or economic burden.

The previous cycles of Scotland Pakistan Scholarship have had a substantial impact, benefitting thousands of school girls and hundreds of female university students. They have not only provided women and girls with the opportunity to pursue and continue schooling but also supported the Pakistani Government in decreasing the number of out-of-school children and supporting the Higher Education sector.

#### **Current cycle of scholarships, 2019-24**

In its current cycle, the scholarships have continued to assist ambitious women from disadvantaged backgrounds in completing their secondary education and pursuing master's and bachelor's degrees in fields that are of critical importance to the overall development of the country. These scholarships not only allow for increased female participation in schools and higher education but promote greater gender equality in sectors and academic fields that women in Pakistan don't typically pursue. At the university level, they are given the opportunity to specialise in fields such as food security, education and health sciences which require urgent attention and greater focus as Pakistan grapples with current challenges.

Furthermore, 18 students who were enrolled in PhD programs in Pakistani universities have been offered PhD travel grants, presenting them with the opportunity to conduct research in various Scottish Universities.

#### **Lines to take**

- The Scottish Government is proud to fund the Scotland Pakistan Scholarships for Young Women and Girls. Every year the scheme supports hundreds of women to access higher education.
- Since it was launched in 2013, more than 1,100 women have been supported to achieve their ambitions and reach their full potential. This is in addition to more than 10,000 school scholarships for girls. The higher education scholarship scheme is open to women of all ages who live in Pakistan.
- Girls face the largest barriers to accessing secondary and undergraduate education. These scholarships make education more affordable, allowing parents to continue their children's education without any financial or economic burden. The programme is designed to have the greatest impact towards creating a new generation of educated women who would not otherwise have those opportunities.