



Statement on concerns regarding development activities near Margalla Hills National Park

WWF-Pakistan expresses its serious and escalating concern regarding ongoing and proposed development activities in areas adjoining the Margalla Hills National Park, particularly within ecologically sensitive foothill zones.

Recent assessments earlier this year on tree removal published by WWF-Pakistan's land clearing activities in Islamabad indicate that large-scale vegetation clearance and infrastructure expansion are taking place across multiple locations within the Islamabad Capital Territory. These developments have also been widely reported and have raised serious concerns among environmental experts, civil society organizations, and the public at large.

The Margalla Hills National Park and its surrounding habitats represent a critical ecological landscape, supporting diverse flora and fauna, including important bird and mammal species, and serving as the lungs and natural water filter to the capital city. Development activities in close proximity to the park, irrespective of whether they fall within formally designated buffer zones or not, pose serious and potentially irreversible risks, including habitat fragmentation, disruption of wildlife movement corridors, and degradation of essential ecosystem services such as groundwater recharge and micro-climate regulation.

Our field-based evidence suggests that the cumulative expansion of road networks, land clearing, and associated infrastructure, particularly along key corridors such as the Margalla Enclave Link Road and adjacent foothill areas, has already resulted in measurable ecological degradation. While certain activities may be linked to the removal of invasive species, the extent, pattern, and scale of clearing strongly indicate broader development-driven impacts.

Recent official statements regarding proposed development in the Margalla foothills have further intensified concern since it is evident that the proposed intervention is not limited to a park alone, but includes associated large-scale infrastructure such as hotels, sports facilities, and supporting developments. WWF-Pakistan, along with other stakeholders, remains concerned regarding the limited availability of publicly disclosed Environmental Impact Assessments, the extent of stakeholder consultation, and the absence of clearly articulated ecological restoration and mitigation plans for several of these projects.

Given the ecological sensitivity of the Margalla Hills and surrounding areas, it is essential that all development interventions follow rigorous environmental safeguards and transparent review processes.

Considering the above, WWF-Pakistan respectfully urges the Capital Development Authority with the support of relevant authorities such as IWMB to:

- Formally designate and enforce ‘no-go’ zones within and adjoining Margalla Hills National Park, particularly in critical habitats and wildlife corridors, where all forms of development will be strictly prohibited
- Ensure that any proposed development outside designated no-go zones is subject to comprehensive, independently reviewed Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), with full public disclosure and stakeholder consultation prior to approval
- Immediately suspend all ongoing and proposed development activities in sensitive foothill areas pending a transparent environmental review

WWF-Pakistan remains committed to constructive engagement and stands ready to support the development of a science-based and environmentally responsible pathway forward.