**PRESS RELEASE**

***Serena Hotel Becomes First Pakistan Company to Obtain Global Gender Equality Certification***

Serena Hotels, one of Pakistan’s leading hospitality companies, is now the first Company in Pakistan and the second hospitality company globally to obtain the Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE) Certification. As an EDGE certified company, Serena Hotels is now part of a group of almost 200 companies that are paving the way for gender equality in their workforce across five continents and representing 24 different industries.

EDGE is the leading global standard for gender equality, and the certification recognizes Serena Hotels’ global commitments to creating a workplace where men and women are respected and have equal opportunities to thrive and grow professionally.

Globally, women make up half of the workforce in the tourism sector but are overrepresented in low-rank jobs, often get underpaid and also carry out the bulk of unpaid work in small-scale family run tourism enterprises. In Pakistan these challenges are more severe as companies in the tourism sector operate in a culturally and legally conservative context for women. Social norms governing women’s roles in families, their access to public spaces and about what are considered ‘appropriate’ professions for women prevent women from accessing education, trainings and resources to get jobs or to grow in their professions. As the only EDGE certified company in Pakistan and one of the few in the tourism sector globally, Serena Hotels Pakistan is leading the way towards gender equality in the workplace for companies in Pakistan as well as in the tourism sector worldwide.

“Women make up 12% of our overall workforce despite many social and cultural challenges,” said Aziz Boolani, Serena Hotels’ Chief Executive Officer. “As a leading hotel chain, Serena Hotels makes every effort to encourage women for their professional development for assuming higher positions including the leadership role.”

Additionally, a growing body of research now supports the strong links between gender equality in private sector organizations and increased profits, growth and innovation for companies that invest in closing gender gaps in their organization.

As a responsible corporate body, Serena Hotels has consistently focused on sustainability in their business practices. In 2018, Serena Hotels was recognized as a top performer at the *Employer of Choice for Gender Balance* awards organized by the International Finance Corporation for companies in the Pakistan Business Council. Additionally, several of Serena Hotels’ initiatives focus on the empowerment of women through capacity building and employment. One such CSR initiative is the “Karighar” program launched by Serena Hotels, that makes an impact by providing entrepreneurship training to various segments of women to engender sustainable growth for their ventures and to improve their quality of life overall.

The EDGE assessment and certification process follows a strict and methodologically rigorous process and focuses on five key workplace areas: *recruitment and promotion*, *leadership development*, *equal pay*, *flexible work arrangements*, and *overall company culture*. The assessment reviewed Serena Hotel’s company statistics, HR policies and practices, and included a survey of the over 1800 strong workforce. Following in-depth interviews and discussions, including with Serena Hotel’s HR professionals, Serena Hotels has developed a set of follow-up actions that will continue to promote gender parity in their workforce.