

AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE FOR CHINA - PAKISTAN FORUM

China-Pakistan: The Way Forward

Enhancing Regional Engagement and Security under the Belt and Road Vision

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Distinguished Speakers;

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me at the outset thank the organizers, **Center for China and Globalization (CCG) and Understanding China Forum (UCM)**, for inviting me to speak at this Forum.

It is both a pleasure and a privilege to be addressing this august gathering of eminent luminaries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Asia and beyond, President Xi's historic Belt and Road Initiative is a win-win proposition aimed at bringing shared prosperity for all.

Pakistan sees BRI as an initiative of generational impact which will shape the course of the 21st century. It promotes mutually beneficial cooperation, focus on improving infrastructure connectivity, build stronger momentum for common development and forge even closer partnerships.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative, is a game changer for Pakistan and the wider region. It is a package of several projects related to infrastructure development, power generation, fiber-optic connectivity, railways, airports and industrialization.

Fully aligned with the national development agenda of Pakistan, CPEC is the key to our economic development and is an excellent example of an open, coordinated, and inclusive development paradigm that benefits all stakeholders.

We have already begun reaping dividends of CPEC energy and infrastructure projects. CPEC investment and its spin off effects have generated thousands of jobs.

CPEC has achieved important early harvest projects and has entered into its second phase which is even more promising as it broadens the scope of cooperation and focuses on socio-economic development, agricultural cooperation and industrialization.

The Special Economic Zones, being developed under CPEC, will rejuvenate Pakistan's process of industrialization and further spur economic development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Substantive progress on all dimensions of CPEC reflects the immense hard work, devotion and commitment to the project from both sides. It is due to this resolute commitment that even during the Covid-19 pandemic, CPEC cooperation and work on all projects continued unhindered.

10th meeting of the JCC was recently held which reviewed the progress in different areas under CPEC and identified new avenues of cooperation. We are confident that bilateral cooperation under CPEC framework would be further strengthened in the future under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan and President Xi Jinping.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, Pakistan has transformed its policy from geopolitics to geo-economics, and we endeavor to promote trade, transit, and energy flows as well as people-to-people exchanges between Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and China.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year, Pakistan and China are celebrating 70th anniversary of establishment of their diplomatic relations. Over the past seven decades, our bilateral relations have grown from strength to strength and reached a pinnacle that finds a few parallels in

the modern history of inter-state relations. Our relationship has become an ‘all-weather strategic cooperative partnership’.

In order to further consolidate our ongoing efforts for deepening bilateral friendship, I would like to propose following ideas as a **way forward**:

- i. The two countries should maintain momentum of high-level exchanges which have been a hallmark of our bilateral ties. The high level exchanges would further enrich our all-weather friendship and set the trajectory of our future ties.
- ii. Pakistan and China have maintained strategic communication and coordination at all tiers in the past. Faced with uncertainties in global political landscape and new challenges, we should further enhance our strategic coordination to safeguard our common interests.
- iii. Our region is experiencing profound transformation especially after the exit of U.S. from Afghanistan. Our two countries need to maintain close cooperation and support collective efforts for regional peace and stability, which is a prerequisite for the success of BRI and CPEC.
- iv. Economic and trade ties have emerged as a prominent feature of bilateral relations after the start of CPEC and finalization of 2nd Phase of China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement. This is evidenced by the fact that China is now Pakistan’s largest trade partner and bilateral trade has grown despite the ongoing pandemic. Our two countries should further deepen trade and economic linkages. Pakistan, in particular, would need Chinese support to integrate with ASEAN, SCO and RCEP blocs.
- v. High quality development of CPEC enjoys strong support of our leadership. It is important to expedite completion of all ongoing projects, fast-paced development of SEZs and Gwadar port. On its part, Pakistan would continue to incentivize Chinese investment to Pakistan in SEZs and other CPEC projects.
- vi. In the context of 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations, the two countries organized many celebratory activities with main focus on deepening people-to-people exchanges, cultural cooperation and sister cities/provinces relationship. We should continue to bring our peoples together and pass on the finest traditions of bilateral friendship to younger generations of the two countries.

I am confident that our bilateral cooperation will be further strengthened in future and we would continue to work together to build a closer Pakistan-China community with a shared future.

Thank you!

Long-Live China-Pakistan Friendship