

2021 China-Pakistan Friendship Provinces and Cities Forum

09 December 2021

H.E. Mr. Zhang Chunxian,

Vice Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China

Honorable Muhammad Qasim Khan Suri,

Deputy Speaker, National Assembly of Pakistan

H.E. Mr. Lin Songtian,

President of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries

Ambassador Sha Zukang,

President, China-Pakistan Friendship Association,

H.E. Ambassador Nong Rong,

Mr. Mohsin Mushtaq, Secretary IPC

Mr. Asim Iftikhar, Additional Foreign Secretary

Dignitaries and Senior officials from provinces and cities of China and Pakistan

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalam-o-Alaikum, Good afternoon Xia Wu hao

It is my singular honor to attend today the China-Pakistan Friendship Provinces and Cities Forum.

Let me first express my gratitude to H.E. Mr. Zhang Chunxian for gracing today's event and for his enthusiasm for enhancing friendly ties between Pakistan and China.

As an old friend of Pakistan, I am confident that he would continue to play his laudable role for further elevating Pakistan-China friendship to a new pedestal of bilateral understanding and mutual trust.

Our special thanks to Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) which is always at the forefront in promoting high-quality exchanges between provincial and local leaderships of two brotherly countries. The CPAFFC is a great friend of Pakistan and we acknowledge its contributions under the leadership of Ambassador Li Songtian and his able team for strengthening our friendship and deepening people-to-people exchanges between the two Iron-Brothers.

I would also like to thank H.E. Ambassador Sha Zukang, President of China-Pakistan Friendship Association for his passion and personal conviction for the importance of our friendship and nurturing it over the years.

With the support of so many friends and well-wishers, I am therefore confident that this year's Forum would further bring our peoples together and open new vistas of cooperation for deepening economic, trade and cultural ties between Pakistan and China.

Distinguished Guests,

Longevity, resilience and trust best describe Pakistan-China friendship. There is no relationship like ours which so deeply touches the soul of our peoples and evokes such strong emotions. Poetic expressions with imaginative diction are used to capture the essence of this fabulous friendship.

There is a famous Chinese saying that:

'As distance tests the stamina of horse, so time reveals the sincerity of a friend'

Seen from this perspective, the seed of bilateral friendship sown 70 years ago has now blossomed into an evergreen tree with deep roots, strong branches and fragrant and colourful flowers.

Dear Friends,

One of the most promising aspects of our bilateral relations is the increasing people-to-people contact between our two countries. I am very pleased to note that ever-expanding cooperation between the provinces and cities of our two countries is further solidifying linkages between our peoples.

Today with the signing of 11 new agreements, we have 43 provinces and cities including lakes and parks which are now closely connected through friendship relationship. This year alone we have signed altogether 23 new friendship agreements, which is unprecedented. I take this opportunity to thank the leadership and officials of all these provinces and cities for making this history. Certainly, this would provide a strong foundation for the development of our future ties, expanding the economic and trade relations; spurring cultural and tourism exchanges and bringing us closer to jointly build Pakistan-China Community of Shared Destiny in New Era.

Distinguished Guests,

2021 could not have been more emblematic for our two nations. This year we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of establishment of Pakistan-China friendship. We have so far organized over 120 events and today's Forum is an important part of these celebrations.

This year also marks the centenary of the Communist Party of China which has made immense sacrifices for Chinese people and for China's peaceful rise in global politics and economics.

I would like to congratulate the government and people of China on CPC's centenary and pay tribute to the CPC leadership and members for their contributions to strengthening our bilateral friendship.

Dear Friends,

While we bask in the warmth and glitter of our friendship, we do so with humility and gratitude. We thank the successive generations of our leadership and people, enterprises and universities, provinces and cities for their unwavering support to our all-weather strategic cooperative partnership.

Before concluding, let me suggest three points for pragmatic cooperation and implementation of these friendship agreements:

- i. Sister-Provinces and Cities may consider to appoint focal-persons for regular follow-up and coordination.
- ii. They may together identify an area of their mutual strength and initiate a pilot project of joint cooperation.
- iii. They may consider organizing sector-specific trade and investment online / offline conferences to promote B2B exchanges.

In the end, let us make a resolve that we would invest in this friendship with new vigour and vitality and continue our efforts to bequeath the inspiring tale of our relationship to the younger generations of Pakistan and China, in whose hands lie the future of our eternal friendship.

Long-Live Pakistan-China Friendship

Ba Zhong You Yi Wan Sui

I thank you all!