

Opening Ceremony of Pakistan Food and Cultural Festival

13 August 2022

Ambassador Sha Zukang, President, China-Pakistan Friendship Association

Ms. Li Xiaofei, CEO of Ennova Culture Group

Mr. Guo JizJun, Vice Chairman of ENN Group

Excellencies

Members of the diplomatic and defence corps

Management of the Silk Road International Art Center

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

Assalam o Alaikum, good afternoon, Da Jia Hao

On behalf of my wife and colleagues at the Embassy, I have the great pleasure to welcome you all at this beautiful venue of Silk Road International Art Centre to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Pakistan's independence.

Today, I have a special feeling to celebrate this milestone as Ambassador in a country with which Pakistan enjoys special bonds of friendship and brotherhood spanning over a period of seven decades.

I therefore thank you all, especially those who have travelled from Beijing, to be with us and share our joy today.

Let me first express our gratitude to Ambassador Sha Zukang for gracing today's event as the Guest of Honor. He is an old friend of Pakistan and his personal conviction for Pakistan-China friendship and his role in nurturing these ties over the years is indeed inspiring.

Distinguished Guests

75 years ago on 14th August 1947, Pakistan emerged as an independent nation on the map of the world. Ever since, it has been a journey of nation building, progress and development and forging friendly relations with other countries. Today, Pakistan as the 5th largest nation of 220 million hardworking and talented people, with a strong agriculture base, a thriving industrial sector and an attractive investment destination, is turning a new corner to march towards a brighter future.

With the rich history and a land which has been a cradle of civilizations and birthplace of many religions, with breath-taking natural landscapes and centuries old heritage, a diverse culture and exotic cuisine, Pakistan awaits you all for your next touristic outing.

Dear friends

Pakistan seeks friendly and mutually beneficial relations with all countries in our neighbourhood, region and beyond. As a responsible nation, we uphold the principles of UN charter and strongly believe in multilateralism. As one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping, we have actively contributed to global peace and stability. We believe that interstate relations should be based on mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs.

Pakistan takes pride in its special friendship with China which is time-tested and timeless. It transcends the normal precepts of interstate relationship having assumed a uniqueness of its own kind. Special poetic expressions have been coined to describe it from 'iron-brotherhood' to 'all-weather strategic partnership'. We in Pakistan consider it higher than the mountains, deeper than the oceans, sweeter than honey and stronger than steel. In China, the expression 'ba-tie' is only reserved for Pakistan.

Last year, our two nations celebrated the 70 years of their diplomatic ties with great fanfare. Even the Covid-19 pandemic could not lessen our sprit or dampen our enthusiasm and we succeeded in marking this milestone by organizing over 140 events - an unprecedented feat for any such celebrations. This has indeed given a new meaning to our relationship and a new direction for taking it to even higher levels.

China is Pakistan's largest trading partner. Last year, and even in the first half of this year, we have witnessed substantial increase in our bilateral trade. The second phase of Free Trade Agreement launched in 2020 and the setting up of a number of Pakistan pavilions in various cities of China and even online pavilions on Chinese major e-commerce platforms has brought a new momentum to our bilateral trading relationship.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, as the flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative has transformed the economic landscape of Pakistan. It has upgraded our physical infrastructure, enhanced our energy capacities, and created thousands of new jobs thus contributing to overall socio-economic development of the country. Besides contributing to the economic prosperity of our two peoples, CPEC has also helped in economic integration and connectivity within our region. Our two

governments remain committed to CPEC and its high quality development as we enter into phase-II focusing on industrialization, agriculture and IT sectors.

Ladies & Gentlemen

Today's event is not only to mark our independence celebrations but is also to bring to you the beauty of the land and the people of Pakistan. Here, you would be able to enjoy Pakistani popular products, traditional music, authentic cuisine and some selected movies, one of them would be of interest to children, the first animated movie of Pakistan produced jointly with China. There is also a special activity corner for the children where they would be making a large painting depicting Pakistan-China friendship. Don't miss to watch virtual reality tour of some Pakistani famous tourist spots and take photos in front of the photo booths, especially prepared for this event. We hope that all these activities would inspire you to visit Pakistan, especially next year which our two countries are observing as the Year of Tourism Exchanges.

In the end, I would like to thank all our sponsors and partners for their support in organizing this event. I would especially like to convey my appreciation to the ENN group and the Silk Road International Art Center for partnering with the Embassy to hold this festival. The manner in which the professional team of the center, under the able leadership of Ms. Claudia, Director of the Center and Ms. Rebekah, the energetic and talented Project Director of this event, has worked tirelessly for the last few weeks is indeed praiseworthy and impressive.

I would also like to acknowledge the immense hard work and coordination carried out by my own team at the Embassy. Each one of you has done a splendid job in making this event a great success.

Once again thank you all. Enjoy the rest of the show.

Long-Live Pakistan,

Long-Live China,

Long-Live Pakistan-China Friendship.