

Remarks by Foreign Minister of Pakistan Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi at the SCO Council of Heads of Governments Dushanbe

Excellency
Mr. QohirRasulzoda, Prime Minister of Tajikistan,
Distinguished SCO Heads of Government,
Secretary General Rashid Alimov
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great privilege to represent Pakistan in this Council of Heads of Government meeting.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to the Chairman of the Council, Prime Minister Rasulzoda and to the Government and people of Tajikistan for their warm hospitality.

I carry greetings and good wishes from Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Imran Khan, who regrettably could not attend on account of pressing commitments, back home. On behalf of the new Government of Pakistan I would like to convey the message of goodwill and partnership to all present here today.

I commend the sterling contribution of the Secretary General His Excellency Alimov for his able stewardship of the Organization. I would also like to thank Director Executive Committee of SCO-RATS Excellency Sysoyev who will also be completing his term by the year end, for his commitment and hard work.

I wish them both success in their future endeavors. We welcome appointment of Excellency Imamovich as the next Secretary General of SCO and Excellency Fayozovich as Director of Executive Committee of SCO-RATS. I assure them our full support. I take this opportunity to appreciate the forward looking outcomes of Qingdao Summit which hold the promise of moving the SCO in meeting the challenges that confront us today and will bind the SCO countries for enhanced technological development.

Tajikistan is Pakistan's close neighbour, a good friend and a dear brother. The bonds of kith and clan & culture and commerce tie the Tajik and Pakistani nations in an abiding relationship. Across the vast Eurasian landmass, nations and peoples have interacted & amalgamated, communicated & collaborated, and progressed & prospered for millennia. Our abiding ties today have happily assumed the shape of SCO.

SCO is not just a regional platform, but a fulcrum representing the hopes, the aspirations, the dreams and the expectations of nearly half of humanity. Animated by the Shanghai Spirit, SCO affords the right template, to reimagine the future in the image of the past.

Mr. Chairman,

The need for conduct of international relations, based on time honoured principles of mutual trust and mutual respect, shared aspirations and acceptance of diversity resonates now, more than ever before. The world today, finds itself in a state of flux. Forces of coercion and unilateralism are on the rise. Terrorism, regional and international conflicts, climate change, inequitable growth and protectionist impulses are imperiling global trade and world peace. This complex and challenging environment calls for a global architecture for peace, security and development that treats all sovereign states on the footings of equality and respect. By subscribing to these principles, SCO presages such an architecture.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan has always been a firm believer and an ardent supporter of the SCO charter. We believe that Pakistan's destiny remains inextricably linked with SCO's. Our formal accession last year, was a landmark development that ushers a fresh chapter in our association with the organization. As the new Pakistan commences its journey with SCO, as a full and equal partner, we will work to play, an even greater role in the realization of shared aspirations.

Allow me to elaborate:

FIRSTLY,

We remain determined to afford Central Asia through our seaports and highways, the shortest, most seamless access to the sea.

We have proposed earlier, and I reiterate once again, establishment of SCO-Pakistan Corridors for trade, transit and energy.

SECONDLY,

Pakistan has made substantial gains in combating terrorism and extremism. In recent years, we have conducted the world's largest and most effective counter terrorism operation.

Through the SCO Regional Anti Terrorist Structure, Pakistan remains ready to share its experience and expertise in the domain of combating terrorism. Pakistan participated in 2018 Peace Mission Exercises held in Russia. We thank Russia for hosting the exercises that underscore the importance of fighting terrorism and working together for peace.

THIRDLY,

Peace and security in Afghanistan, are essential for enduring peace, stability and prosperity in our region. Pakistan supports SCO's Contact Group on Afghanistan and wishes to see this group contribute more effectively to restoration of peace and stability in that country.

Mr. Chairman

I would like to thank the SCO Secretariat for facilitating Pakistan's induction into SCO programmes and processes.

This Council of Heads of Government meeting marks another important milestone in this regard. We are happy to note that in addition to finalising financial arrangements, this meeting will conclude significant understandings on trade, scientific collaboration, environmental protection and food security, among others. We also welcome a Pakistani banking institution's formal association with the Inter Bank Association.

Mr. Chairman,

It is vital that SCO sustains, and further builds upon the momentum already generated. Allow me to venture a few proposals; I suggest that we:

First: *Evolve a SCO wide mechanism for conducting trade, and investments in local currencies, and through regional and national institutions, including SCO Development Bank and SCO Development Fund.*

Second: *Take a long term view of developmental projects, that have a beneficial spin off impact on the entire region. The Belt and Road Initiative and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor merit SCO's full support.*

Third: *Learn from the many laudable examples and lessons from within the SCO community on eradicating poverty and fast tracking development.*

Fourth: *Promote intra-regional and trans-regional contacts, through evolving SCO wide visa regime, for business people. Besides improved road and rail connectivity, I suggest we examine the feasibility of a Joint SCO Airline.*

Fifth: *Open up more meaningfully to observers and dialogue partners.*

Finally: *Focus on optimally utilizing the capabilities of our youth. SCO initiatives on youth interaction and cooperation should be further strengthened.*

Mr. Chairman,

SCO has come a long way since its inception. It is the vital trans-regional link, the essential chain between a glorious past and a promising future. Let us leverage the political will of the nations represented here to harness the SCO's full potential and prospects. Pakistan stands ready to contribute to this noble endeavor.

Thank you.