

Second Belt and Road Forum Address by Prime Minister Imran Khan at Opening Ceremony Belt and Road Cooperation: Shaping a Brighter Future

Excellency President Xi Jinping,
Esteemed World Leaders,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to speak at the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. I congratulate President Xi Jinping and the Government of People's Republic of China for organizing this important event.

As the Belt and Road transforms from vision into reality, this gathering of partners and friends affords a useful platform for taking stock and setting the agenda. In a world of geopolitical uncertainty, of rising inequality and barriers to trade, the BRI offers a model of collaboration, partnership, connectivity and shared prosperity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

BRI marks a new and distinct phase in the onward march of nations of the world along the path of globalization. The presence of so many world leaders today is proof that we choose hope over despair and cooperation over confrontation. 122 States and 49 International Organizations have signed on to BRI's vision and this is historic and monumental development.

Distinguished Participants,

Pakistan is proud to have partnered and pioneered with China in this transformational endeavour. We have been among BRI's earliest and most enthusiastic proponents. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, one of BRI's major components and one of its earliest manifestations, has made substantial progress. Pakistan's energy supplies have increased massively. Our critical infrastructure gaps are being plugged. Gwadar, once a small fishing village, is transforming rapidly into a commercial hub. The Gwadar Airport will be the largest in the country.

Together, Pakistan and China are entering the next phase of CPEC, with greater emphasis on socioeconomic uplift, poverty alleviation, agricultural cooperation and industrial development.

We are expanding the frontiers of knowledge through closer engagement and deeper cooperation in the fields of education, innovation and technology. Along the length of the Corridor, Special Economic Zones are set to come up, offering opportunities for investments for Pakistani, Chinese and foreign entrepreneurs. Supplementing the next phase of CPEC, we are signing an expanded Pakistan-China Free Trade Agreement.

We are changing Pakistan's economic landscape and Insha-Allah the destiny of our people. I want to thank China and its leadership for their unwavering support for Pakistan. Our deep-rooted friendship, partnership and brotherhood with China remains strong, resilient and unbreakable, standing tall in the face of every challenge. I take this opportunity to invite all of you to avail of

our liberal foreign investment regime and participate in our economy, in particular infrastructure, railways, dams, IT and manufacturing.

Distinguished Participants,

As the Belt and Road Initiative takes a further concrete shape, I suggest we direct our efforts and focus on the peoples of our countries, and towards addressing impediments on their way to sustainable growth. Some of these points have already been touched upon by President Xi Jinping in his speech. I suggest the following:

FIRSTLY To undertake joint efforts to mitigate climate change. In our Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, we successfully planted a billion trees. President of Chile has already elaborated on this. We launched a nationwide project to plant 10 billion trees. I suggest we launch a joint project to plant 100 billion trees in the next two years, so that we can mitigate the effects of climate change for our coming generations.

SECONDLY Establish a BRI Tourism Corridor to promote people-to-people contacts and intercultural understanding.

THIRDLY Establish an office of Anti-Corruption Cooperation to combat the scourge of white-collar crime. White-collar crimes are devastating the world.

FOURTHLY Create a Poverty Alleviation Fund that supplements national efforts in the fight against poverty and malnourishment. In Pakistan, we have recently launched a targeted poverty alleviation programme called Ehsas, or feeling. The aim should be to emulate China's spectacular success in lifting 800 million people out of poverty within a matter of decades.

FIFTHLY Make concerted efforts to further liberalize trade and investment flows encouraging our private sector and businesses to collaborate in projects.

Distinguished Participants,

China's marvelous civilization has given the world wisdom, harmony and prosperity. It has gifted to humanity, great inventions, art and aesthetics and a culture of compassion and co-existence.

As a famous Chinese proverb says, 'The Ocean is vast because it rejects no rivers.'

Pakistan will continue to work on the basis of mutual respect and equal opportunity, with China and other BRI partners, for a better future of our people. Pakistan will partner with all those who share the vision for a peaceful and prosperous world. We will work together to realize a future of hope and happiness.

Thank You!