

**Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC)'s Investment and
Trade Cooperation Promotion Forum and Signing Ceremony**
(Shanghai, 6 November 2020)

Remarks by the Ambassador

Mr. Zhong Bo, Member of the Standing Committee of the XPCC Party Committee,

[Salutations for MOFCOM and Shanghai Government representatives]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address today's Forum. I commend the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) for hosting today's event and providing a platform for political and business leaders for useful exchanges.

The XPCC has made valuable contributions to the economic and social development of China and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Through these efforts, people from all walks of life and from various groups are able to enjoy peace and harmony, and render invaluable contributions to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Even faced with the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, the XPCC was successful in keeping the life and well-being of the local people as its top priority. The people-centric approach of China's leadership has enabled the country to lead the global response to the pandemic and has provided a good example for orderly recovery. The convening of the 3rd China International Import Expo (CIIE) is yet another important milestone in this context, and sends an unmistakable signal of China's continuing reform and opening up, and willingness to share the fruits of its developments with partners overseas.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a time-tested friend, Pakistan salutes the courage and dedication of the Chinese people and shares their joy of this hard-earned success. In keeping with the time-honoured traditions of our all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, our two nations have faced common challenges standing shoulder to shoulder. We support international solidarity and cooperation in these difficult times and Pakistan opposes attempts for politicization of the virus and stigmatization.

Adhering to the principle of UN Charter, Pakistan is opposed to interference in the internal affairs of China, including in Xinjiang. We are well aware and supportive of the Xinjiang people and government's efforts against poverty and extremism. The right to dignity and safety is a fundamental one. We are happy to see people of all ethnic groups enjoying equal rights in Xinjiang and leading happy lives as productive members of society.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The deep cultural linkages between the people of Xinjiang and the bordering areas of Pakistan are rooted in centuries of interaction along the ancient silk routes. In modern times, the Karakoram Highway also known as Friendship Highway, linking Xinjiang with northern region of Pakistan, is an unparalleled feat of engineering. The border crossing at Khunjerab Pass is among the highest paved border crossings in the world. This speaks to the consensus of successive generations of leaders in Pakistan and China to forge deeper and stronger ties, regardless of changes in the international or regional landscapes.

Through the visionary Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), our two peoples have come even closer on the road to forging a community of shared future. Starting from Kashgar in southern Xinjiang, CPEC traverses multiple routes across the length of Pakistan to culminate in the thriving port cities of Karachi and Gwadar. This enhanced connectivity – together with the second phase of the Pakistan-China Free Trade Agreement – provides an enabling environment for ever more trade and investment links.

As major infrastructure projects are completed, CPEC is now entering the next stage of higher-quality development. Through the setting up of special economic zones (SEZs) along CPEC's routes, Pakistan will leverage its unique geographic advantages and competitive edge to accelerate industrial modernization and spur regional connectivity.

Through the 2nd phase of the China- Pakistan Free Trade Agreement, the businessmen of the two counties have been provided much deeper access to the respective markets. Nearly 1000 products now can be traded duty free. I invite traders of the two countries to benefit from this great opportunity.

The XPCC and its enterprises have a long history of mutually beneficial cooperation with their Pakistani partners. The Embassy is working with the XPCC on a range of proposals including establishment of a trade centre in Xinjiang, and initiatives in the Free Trade Zone. These would further deepen our friendship and multiply opportunities for our business sectors.

Today, we are witnessing a signing ceremony to further this successful cooperation. I congratulate the participating enterprises, and assure you that the Government of Pakistan will extend maximum possible facilitation to our partners from the business community in playing their due role in our respective national development strategies.

I also look forward to more enterprises from China, including the XPCC, to partner with their Pakistani friends and explore opportunities for win-win cooperation. You will have our full support.

Thank you!