**China and Pakistan iron-clad friendship is rock-solid**

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China and Pakistan are very close neighbors connected by mountains and rivers, and are indestructible iron-clad brothers with a shared future. Under the strategic guidance of the leaders of the two countries, China-Pakistan relations have continued to forge ahead, and have always maintained robust vigor despite the changes of the international situation.

Year 2021 marked the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. More than 100 celebrations were held, which injected new vitality into China-Pakistan relations. The world today is undergoing major changes unseen in a century. China and Pakistan are both at a critical period of national development. It is an inevitable choice for the two countries to join hands and move forward together to build a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era. The all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between China and Pakistan is unique. The friendship between the two sides will be passed on from generation to generation and will not be shaken or changed by a single event.

China always regards its ties with Pakistan as a priority in its diplomacy with neighboring countries. China will firmly support Pakistan in defending national sovereignty and security, maintaining unity, achieving stability, development and prosperity.

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Developing amicable relations with China has always been a common perception in Pakistan that transcends all political differences and enjoys a high degree of agreement throughout the country. The two countries and two militaries have maintained the momentum of close high-level exchanges, strengthened strategic communication and jointly led the direction of China-Pakistan relations. In February this year, President Xi Jinping met with then Prime Minister Imran Khan in Beijing during his visit to China to attend the Opening Ceremony of 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. Recently, Premier Li Keqiang talked over phone with Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and had an in-depth exchange of views on bilateral ties. In March, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Pakistan and the Chinese Foreign Minister attended the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers for the first time in history. Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will make his first official bilateral visit to China on 21 May, the anniversary day that China and Pakistan established diplomatic relations. On 11 March, the first batch of six J-10C was formally inducted to Pakistan Air Force. The Pakistani political and military leadership praised this grand military cooperation project as another important symbol of China-Pakistan all-weather friendship, and will strongly boost the new development of Pakistani military capacity.

Under the strategic planning of President Xi Jinping, the CPEC has been expanded in an all-round way, entering a new stage of enrichment and expansion. The two sides have initiated or completed 46 of the 70 early-harvest projects with a total investment of 25.4 billion US dollars. The CPEC improved has Pakistan’s infrastructure, which is playing a major role in the economic development of the country. New breakthroughs keep flourishing in industrial cooperation. The East Bay Expressway of Gwadar Port has been completed and will open for traffic soon. This year, China donated another 3,000 sets of solar panel to Gwadar people, which brings the total number of donation to 7,000 sets. The construction of a desalination plant aided by China will start soon in Gwadar. Two units of the Karot Hydropower project have started to provide stable and clean power to Pakistan’s power grid since May. After its full operation, its four units will provide electricity for 5 million people. The two countries stand ready to further synergize development strategies, firmly advance the development of CPEC, hold a new round of CPEC Joint Cooperation Committee meeting in due course, implement the Framework Agreement on Industrial Cooperation, strengthen cooperation in industries, people’s livelihood and agriculture, and jointly implement high quality development of CPEC with new Pakistan speed.

After the terrorist attack on a van of the Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi on April 26, Pakistani President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the National Assembly, leaders of various political parties and people from all sectors unanimously condemned the terrorist attack. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan to convey condolences at the earliest opportunity and sent a letter of condolence to the Chinese leaders. The Pakistani cabinet has decided to take unprecedented measures to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens in Pakistan. China fully recognizes this.

The governments and leaders of China and Pakistan have agreed that the two countries should take immediate action and adopt firm and effective measures to deal with it. The pressing task is to speed up the investigation and hunting down of the perpetrators and give exemplary punishment to them as soon as possible. Targeted measures need to be taken to improve security protection for Chinese personnel, institutions and projects in Pakistan. Efforts should be made to give timely security warnings, and plug security loopholes so as to prevent similar incidents from happening again. China will continue to support Pakistan in enhancing its counter-terrorism capacity, and stands ready to make joint efforts with Pakistan to thwart any attempt to undermine China-Pakistan relations.

We are proud of our deeply rooted friendship. People-to-people exchanges between the two countries will not be deterred by any terrorism. The Confucius Institutes in Pakistan will continue to teach Chinese to Pakistani students through various means to promote the traditional friendship between the two countries. People-to-people and cultural exchanges between our two countries will never stop, the hearts of the two peoples will become closer.

President Xi Jinping pointed out that since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan 70 years ago, no matter how the international situation changes, the two sides have always shown each other with sincerity and shared weal and woe. China is firmly committed to advancing China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership and jointly addressing international and regional challenges. I believe that with joint efforts of both sides, the building of a China-Pakistan community with a shared future will surely take new and firm steps!

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