**Remembering the Unforgettable**

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Foreign Office Spokesperson Asim Iftikhar Ahmad strongly condemned the horrific events of September 11 in New York and reaffirmed support and solidarity for innocent victims’ families and loved ones. In the strongest possible terms, Islamabad has also condemned the recent planned terrorist attacks supported from across our borders.

In a statement on the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said, “the people and government of Pakistan remembers and prays for those who lost their precious life that day, and we reiterate our strong condemnation of the horrific events. We especially honour the memories of victims of September 11, 2001, and we also pay tribute to all the victims of terrorism around the world.”

“Over the last two decades, the international community has fought together against this terrorism,” the spokesperson added. However, he also said that the complex challenges posed by terrorism call for further strengthening of international resolve and unity to prevent and counter this menace in all its forms and manifestations, including state terrorism against people living under foreign occupation in disputed territories. The spokesperson also emphasised the need to communicate with neighbours and other countries in the region to the positive aspects of dialogue that lead to an enabling environment for peace and prosperity. Foreign Ministers and diplomats have amply supported the view that dialogue is the only way to create an impression and bring the acceptability of those we are trying to win.

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As the prime minister said, the world must recognise the “new reality” in Afghanistan. Your views on the situation in Afghanistan must appear to be close to what others think is happening in that recently freed country. Surrounding countries should also be willing to contribute to what is happening in the region. It is enviable to give credit to our Foreign Minister and diplomats who have created an enabling environment for peace and settlement of a new Taliban-based government in Afghanistan. Not just one but several countries are making efforts in line with Pakistan to bring peace and prosperity to Afghanistan. The aim of any government in providing any assistance to Afghanistan under the current situation would be an excellent service.

The prevailing situation in Afghanistan calls for security along the Pak-Afghan border and adequate safeguards in place. Afghanistan is an independent country in our view. Therefore, we treat our bilateral relations with Afghanistan in the same context. Our security agencies have to certify and emphasise satisfaction over the efficiency of the comprehensive border management regime, due to which Pakistan’s borders and internal security remain intact amidst the crisis in the region. A vital activity area for security agencies nowadays is supporting the evacuation of foreign and Afghan populations from Afghanistan to other countries. The designs of the spoilers and the place of external and internal forces are unsuitable to peace and stability. These should be thwarted (if found inimical to peace and stability in Pakistan). These must be undertaken at all costs, as it matters for the security of Afghanistan as well as Pakistan.

September 11 marks the death anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the man who changed the map of the world and whose light shines on Muslims of the sub-continent to this day. He was a man who carried with him the immense responsibility of giving birth to a nation. The great Quaid decided to take on the mighty British Empire, not through his sword, but his voice, visionary leadership, and pen. He also took on a hostile majority population of Hindus, who were committed to the Muslims’ marginalisation, elimination, and subjugation in the entire sub-continent. Pakistan came into existence against impossible odds, and the Quaid rose like a beacon of light; his followers passed the way through blood, violence, exile, and death. One always wonders “what if” the Quaid had lived longer and what kind of a Pakistan we would have had today.

Today, on the international front, Pakistan is once again at the helm of affairs, and this time, it is for the right reasons. Today, China considers Pakistan the most reliable ally in its quest for increasing dominance and growth in the region. CPEC and OBOR are changing the dynamics of Pakistan and its bilateral relations with neighbours. In the wake of Afghanistan, countries like Germany, Spain, UK, and many others have thanked Pakistan for facilitating the evacuation of their citizens from Kabul. Even the World Bank and IMF Chief appreciated Pakistan for its humanitarian efforts. A true calling for a nation created by the father of the nation. The Quaid’s Mausoleum in Karachi called to every Pakistani man and woman to come together, reflect and then swear to live by the principles of Unity, Faith, and Discipline, for it’s the only way forward.

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