**Ironclad Friendship**

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June 3, 2024

At the invitation of Premier Li Qiang of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan will start his official visit to China tomorrow. It will be Prime Minister Shehbaz’s first visit to China since the inauguration. We hope and believe the visit will inject strong impetus to upgrade the China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperation, provide constant boost to Pakistan’s economic and social development, send strong signal of solidarity and cooperation between our two countries to the international community.

The strategic communication between leaders of the two countries guides our relations. Over the past 73 years, leaders of the two countries frequently visited each other like close relatives. Under the strategic guidance of our leaders, the ironclad friendship between China and Pakistan stood the test of times. It has become as solid as rock and as steady as mountain. In March, immediately after Pakistan’s general election, President Xi Jinping sent congratulatory letters to President Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz respectively on their inauguration, highlighting that we should jointly build the the upgraded version of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future for the new era. Pakistani leaders replied with gratitude, expressing their strong agreement with President Xi Jinping’s important opinion. PM Shehbaz said in letter that the new government regards high-quality building of the CPEC as its core agenda and will spare no efforts in implementation. It is against this backdrop that PM Shehbaz pays his first official visit to China, realizing the first meeting between top leaders of China and Pakistan since the new government came into office. During the visit, President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress Zhao Leji will meet with PM Shehbaz and exchange views on major subjects in our bilateral relations. We are ready to implement the important consensus reached by our leaders, elevate our all-weather cooperative partnership to a new level with new achievements, to truly benefit both peoples and enrich the profound meaning and vivid practices of the China-Pakistan community with a shared future.

As good neighbors, good friends, good partners and good brothers, our peoples stand together through thick and thin, our ironclad friendship becomes even stronger as time goes by.

Pragmatic cooperation across the board strengthens and refreshes the momentum in our relations. Since the CPEC’s start in 2013 and President Xi Jinping’s historic visit to Pakistan in 2015, the CPEC, from the initial layout of cooperation with focus on Gwadar port, infrastructure development, energy and industrial cooperation, to the construction of an upgraded version with growth corridor, livelihood enhancing corridor, innovation corridor, green corridor and open corridor, has now become an important platform and a well-known name card for all-round cooperation between the two countries. As a landmark project of the Belt and Road international cooperation, batch after batch of projects have been launched, completed and put into operation under the framework of CPEC, bringing a total of US $25.4 billion in direct investment, 236,000 jobs, 510km of highway, more than 8,000 megawatt of electricity and 886km of core electricity transmission network. On 30 May, the multi-mission communication satellite PakSat MM1 was successfully launched from China’s Xichang Satellite Launch Center. It will bring about revolutionary changes to Pakistan’s telecommunications landscape, and stand as another testament to PM Shehbaz’s praise that “China-Pakistan friendship is beyond the boundary and has now reached the outerspace” in commenting the launch of lunar probe ICUBE-Q in early May. We expect the leaders to reach new important consensus on high quality development of the CPEC, so that we can constantly level up our pragmatic cooperation to assist Pakistan to achieve sustainable development, and refresh the momentum for future development of our relations.

All-weather strategic cooperation ensures and safeguards our relations. As good neighbors, good friends, good partners and good brothers, our peoples stand together through thick and thin, our ironclad friendship becomes even stronger as time goes by. History will remember that at critical moments when the People’s Republic of China restored the lawful seat in the United Nations, faced with natural disasters and difficult challenges, our ironclad brother Pakistan always stepped forward and provided precious help. History will also remember that China has always been Pakistan’s strong backing when Pakistan is in need. Whether it’s Pakistan’s generous provision of tents to China during the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008, the firm support between each other in jointly fighting the COVID-19, China’s full efforts in helping Pakistan cope with the once-in-a-century flood in 2022, or China-donated aid projects including Gwadar seawater desalination plant and China-Pakistan friendship hospital, our time-tested friendship constantly evolves with practice. During PM’s visit, there’s no doubt that leaders from both sides will reiterate the firm support for each other on respective core interests and major concerns. It will once again show the all-weather friendship’s important role in ensuring and safeguarding our relations.

In a turbulent and changing world, a healthy, steady and powerful China-Pakistan relationship holds significant meaning to regional peace and prosperity. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. It is also the opening year of the the second “golden decade” in the Belt and Road international cooperation. To our brother Pakistan, this year is the starting year for the new government to comprehensively advance governance. It is also an important year when Pakistani people strive to open a new prospect in national development. China and Pakistan are both developing countries. We face the same historical mission of developing economy and improving people’s livelihood. We will take this opportunity to deepen governance experience exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations, promote development theories sharing and policy coordination, so as to step up the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future for the new era, and contribute to the equal and orderly multipolarization and the universally beneficial and inclusive globalization.

We wish Prime Minister Shehbaz’s visit to China a great success. Long live China-Pakistan friendship! Chin-Pak dosti zindabad!

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