**Pakistan-China Partnership: Bridging Nations, Building Communities**

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The tale of Pakistan-China relations is not an ordinary one. It is an account of brotherhood, friendship and trust whose foundations were laid more than seventy years ago. The vision of the leadership of our two countries at the time laid a solid basis for a relationship, which has subsequently been carefully nurtured into a robust, vibrant, time-tested, all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. Pakistan and its people, I can say with absolute confidence, value the relationship greatly, and proudly call China our ‘Best Friend’. It is heart-warming that in China, the term ‘Ba Tie’ (Iron Brother), is reserved only for Pakistan.
The timeless Pakistan-China partnership and deep-rooted friendship serves the interest of both countries, being the historic choice of our people. Pakistan’s relations with China remain the cornerstone of our foreign policy. The close time-tested friendship with China enjoys the abiding support of the people of Pakistan.
With a time-honored history of brotherhood, our two countries have stood together in rain or shine, building an exemplary ‘iron-clad’ friendship. Despite the vicissitudes of times and changes in the international landscape, the All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership has grown into a towering tree with deep roots of love in the hearts of the two peoples. The bond of love and affection, that the people of the two countries have for each other, indeed remains “higher than the mountains, deeper than the sea and sweeter than honey”.
Zhou Enlai, China’s first Premier, once said, that the friendly interactions between the peoples of China and Pakistan date back to the dawn of history. Certainly, Pakistan-China relations are the continuation of ancient civilizational bonds that have existed between our two nations since ancient times. The flow of trade through the ancient Silk Road and geographical proximity brought the two great Asian civilizations together. Monks and thinkers from China made their historical journeys to Taxila and other Buddhist places in Pakistan, painting a beautiful picture of Gandhara civilization and bringing Buddhist wisdom to China, thus binding the two nations together in an everlasting bond.
The historical evolution of Pakistan-China relationship, and its growing importance in the wake of evolving regional and global developments, remains an exemplary model of an inter-state relationship. The unique relationship of seven decades, underpinned by the rationale of strong political support, mutual trust, and all-round practical cooperation, has matured into a strong strategic partnership.
I would soon be travelling to Beijing, on my first visit after assuming office, to participate in the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation – the event which will mark the completion of a decade of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the iconic and visionary project of President Xi Jinping.
We pay tribute to the vision and statesmanship of President Xi Jinping who, ten years ago, propounded the Vision of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, introducing a novel concept for international development partnership, a new idea for global governance and cooperation, and a fresh approach towards international exchanges, thus drawing up a new blueprint for a better inter-connected world.
The core of the visionary concept is built on socio-economic development; with a focus on the elements of inclusivity, common prosperity and win-win cooperation. It embodies the ideals of an open, interconnected, clean and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace and sustainable security.
As we delve more into this concept, it becomes clear that it draws upon ancient Chinese philosophy and wisdom. The concept of tiānxihe, translating as “harmony under heaven”, refers to the whole world and promotes diversity, while emphasising harmonious and mutual interdependence as the means to enduring peace.
As noted by the recent white paper released by the Chinese State Council, BRI is a ‘key pillar’ of the Global Community of Shared Future. The subsequent unveiling of the concepts - including the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) - have further refined the concept of “Shared Community.”
Pakistan was amongst the first countries to join BRI. As the flagship project of China’s Belt and Road Initiative, CPEC marks a milestone in Pakistan-China relations; by placing economic cooperation and connectivity at the very center of the bilateral agenda, making the two countries more inter-connected than ever before. CPEC remains a shining example of the BRI’s promise of economic prosperity and connectivity. It has transformed the socio-economic landscape of Pakistan, upgrading modern infrastructure, enhancing regional connectivity, ensuring energy security, and creating jobs.
This year Pakistan hosted a series of events and activities marking the successful first decade of CPEC. We were also pleased to welcome Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, as Special Envoy of President Xi Jinping, to Pakistan to attend the ten-year celebrations of China Pakistan Economic Corridor.
Pakistan remains committed to the high-quality implementation and completion of the second phase of CPEC. We fully endorse China’s proposal of developing CPEC as a corridor of growth, innovation, livelihood, green economy, openness, and inclusiveness – representing our two countries’ preference for a human-centric approach, inclusivity, and green development.
Pakistan is also a pioneering member of the GDI Group of Friends and has played an active role in giving it a more concrete shape. As the priority partner under GDI, and the first one to ink an MoU on GDI, Pakistan stands ready to benefit from this cooperation in areas of education, health, climate change and poverty reduction, thus making meaningful contributions to achieving the SDGs in a timely manner.
Pakistan has also supported the GSI and its adherence to the UN Charter and principles of multilateralism and non-interference in internal affairs. Having suffered for a long time due to unresolved disputes, conflicts, and terrorism, we also advocate dialogue and constructive engagement based on mutual respect, for ensuring regional peace in South Asia.
The GCI is yet another landmark and timely initiative of President Xi, promoting respect for diversity, peaceful co-existence, mutual learning, and inclusiveness. In a world marred with discord and divisiveness, dialogue between civilizations can be a means to peace and reconciliation.
Pakistan’s foreign policy objectives have always been those of “peace within and peace without”, as outlined by our founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah. It was, therefore, all but natural for Pakistan to endorse these key initiatives put forth by President Xi Jinping.
In a world marred by multiple challenges like conflicts, economic recessions, food insecurity, social inequalities and climate change, the salience of the Pakistan-China strategic partnership assumes great importance. It is a source of pride and comfort for our two peoples and a factor of peace and stability in the region and beyond. Ours is a relationship of the past, present and the future; and nothing can alter this reality.
As per our long-standing tradition, we support each other on our core issues. We are grateful to China for its support of Pakistan’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and economic security and its principled support on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. We reaffirm our commitment to the One-China Policy and our support to China on its core issues including Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, Xinjiang, and the South China Sea.
As close friends, strategic partners and iron brothers, Pakistan and China are moving forward towards a destiny of shared future. I remain confident and convinced that our friendship will further strengthen in the coming days and attain even greater heights in the years to come.
Long live Pakistan-China Friendship!