

**PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH  
FOR THE  
JINNAH INTSITUTE  
FLOOD CONFERENCE  
(23rd September 2010)**

“Bismillah I Rehmani Raheem,  
Excellencies, Senators, MNAs,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Assalam-o-Alakium

I am honoured to be making the keynote address at the first conference organized by the Jinnah Institute in Pakistan. I am heartened to see that stakeholders on the ground have such clarity and commitment to the project at hand. I stand not only enriched, but encouraged by the level of discussion here today. It tells me that the expert community in the country is active not only in the field, to share the grief and difficulties of our vulnerable sectors, but also actively engaged in coming up with a roadmap for rebuilding the scattered lives of our countrymen.

I want to take this opportunity to inform you and all others listening today that the Government of Pakistan and I are working round the clock to coordinate an effective and rapid response for the 20 million affected by this great flood. We are under no illusion about the staggering nature of the challenges that lie ahead in order to rebuild the country from Khyber to Karachi, but we are also in a race against time to re-build the lives of millions of our people destroyed by this great flood. It is they who mean Pakistan to us, not just its roads and bridges, and it is these people whose livelihoods and homes we have to restore.  
Respected audience

The magnitude of the crisis, as mentioned by you all today, is such that we will need the support and assistance of all organizations and nations in the long road ahead to rehabilitation and reconstruction. It is not a task any government can execute alone, and we are grateful to the UN and the international community, as well as all the local stakeholders who have coordinated with us to step up relief endeavours in the field. It is a crisis that is bigger than many of the natural disasters the world has seen in the last so many years, and it is worth noting that even today, the effects of Hurricane Katrina, which was much smaller than this flood, are still being addressed today by the US government.

Unlike other disasters the world has responded to with speed and sympathy, this one has multiple dimensions that arise from the unprecedented scale of the crisis. Pakistan had barely finished re-settling thousands of refugees that were rendered homeless due to the ongoing war against militancy and terrorism. Even

during the flood, we saw over 137 people killed in one week as a result of terrorism.

We know what horrors we battle each day on the ground. We know that since the end of July, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and AJK & Gilgit Baltistan, over 20 million have watched their entire lives, their homes, their crops, their cattle, their assets washed away, in 82 districts. Just from the flood, 1802 people have lost their lives and 2994 have been gravely injured. The statistics of this disaster are still coming in, but even today I can tell you that over 3.4 million children under the age of 5 and 4.4 million women of child bearing- age are listed as affectees. This means that they are in acute distress and it is our responsibility to pull them out of this distress.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In managing this trauma, the government has been assisted by thousands of volunteers and a vigilant UN cluster. But even so, we have to respond on multiple fronts. With over a 110 health facilities completely destroyed and 342 damaged, we have to plan overnight for the tidal wave of disease that could overtake our homeless and our undernourished people. Health Coordination Hubs have been set up in five cities, and a Disease Early Warning System is serviced by a total of 479 fixed health centers and 544 mobile outreach camps in the affected areas. In addition 33,222 Lady Health Workers are engaged in flood relief activities in 57 districts of the country.

The challenge of ensuring that we don't lose an entire generation to ignorance and poverty is compounded by the loss of almost 11,000 public schools. We will have to pro-actively ensure that our budget priorities don't take money away from these vital social sectors, and that we enhance our capacity to use the resources effectively. Tending to these human tragedies is enough of a test for any country. Yet, Initial estimates reveal that 1.91 million houses have been damaged and that a crop area of 1.38 million acres has been washed away. The ILO has assessed that 5.3 million jobs have been wiped out. The damage to these livelihoods, at the bottom of the economic pyramid could result in extreme food insecurity. To save large parts of the agricultural sector from complete devastation the Government is considering free supply of seed and fertilizer to farmers with a landholding of 25 acres or less.

These are real and present dangers we have to budget for. Yet the flood has destroyed over 1000 bridges and 4000 KMs of road. The energy sector is equally impacted, with WAPDA and PEPCO losses exceeding 13 billion rupees. Federal roads worth Rs.6 billion and Railway losses worth Rs.2.9 billion are being reported. The damages to livelihoods will cause incalculable loss. I am sure you have all discussed the capital losses and come up with serious recommendations

on managing inflation, compensating for lost exports and our growing debt burden.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Confronted with such grave challenges, we have responded as swiftly as possible, and mobilized every resource at our disposal. It will take Pakistan many years to recoup these losses, but we are firm on our resolve to lead from the front.

The government has already disbursed Emergency Relief Assistance worth Rs.2102 million. The Benazir Income Support Programme, Pakistan, Bait-ul-Mal, and other agencies have also been providing relief and assistance to affectees round the clock. In response to this tragedy, as just initial relief, we have already started distributing the first installment of Rs.20,000/- to every family through NADRA's Watan Cards. This assistance net, which will cover emergency sustenance to around 2 million families, will be completed within 40-45 days. An amount of Rs.40 billion is earmarked for this purpose out of which 50% will be contributed by the Federal Government. The BISP is also planning to pay Rs.12,000/- per beneficiary in addition to the above. I have heard fears expressed about the economic situation. Shortfalls are to be expected, but apart from tightening our belt, we will have to reprioritize the budget, freeze expenditure to last year's level, cut non-development expenditures, widen the tax base and impose strict austerity in government departments.

Respected participants

I also realize that natural disasters have been wreaking havoc too often in Pakistan, including climate change in the Himalayan belt. Therefore, it is for us to focus more resources on rapid response mechanisms as well as a policy mandate for NDMA to operate as an anchor for all relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

I take this opportunity to appreciate the NDMA's outreach and initiative in reaching people, engaging the international community, the UN agencies and relief organizations. I also thank the numerous civil society organizations, youth groups and spontaneous volunteers who came forward in Pakistan's time of crisis to lend a helping hand.

The international community has pledged \$ 1.4 billion so far, with the UN appealing for 2 billion dollars. Significant amongst the donors are the US, UK, China, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Germany, UAE, EU, Australia, Canada, India, Norway and Sweden. Besides the various UN Agencies, the World Bank, OIC, IRC and Asian Development Bank are providing exemplary services, in both cash and kind. The IMF has agreed to provide US \$ 450 million as budgetary support to the Government. The World Bank has agreed to fast track its share of

US \$ 1 billion on already committed projects. Similarly, Asian Development Bank has also agreed to fast track its share of US \$ 2 billion loan. With this amount of aid coming in, and far more expected, we have set up independent oversight mechanisms to cascade down from the federal and provincial levels where aid is being utilized. The National Oversight Disaster Management Council shall monitor funds on standard policy guidelines developed by NDMA and other stakeholders. If there are any misgivings about the governance of disaster, I urge all and anyone to assist us developing better oversight mechanisms.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I look to the group of people assembled here today, to point us in the right direction. As a democratic government, we are committed to constructive engagement with the policy community, and we expect our friends to assist us in building back better. I am hopeful that organizations like the Jinnah Institute will remain vigilant in identifying gaps in our planning and outreach, and also assisting us in forming policies that are responsive and inclusive.

It should not take a crisis like this to bring us together as a nation. Quaid e Azam, Mohammad Ali Jinnah had a dream to unite us as a progressive state. It is now our task to fulfil this vision and to build on the sacrifices of our great leader, Shaheed Mohatarma Benazir Bhutto.

In the face of so much adversity, one really has two choices. Either we let events overtake us, or we use the challenge to unite and create opportunities. Pakistan needs that moment of opportunity, and I intend to use this crisis, this tragedy to rebuild a better Pakistan, to re-build hope and integrity when people are looking to us for leadership. Pakistan may be facing its worst crisis today, but I assure you we will not fail Pakistan.

Thank you very much.

Pakistan Pianadabad”