

**Statement of the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Makhdoom Shah
Mahmood Qureshi, at the International Conference on Afghanistan,
Kabul (20 July 2010)**

**The Co-chairs of the Conference,
Foreign Ministers,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honour for me to attend this august gathering in the historic city of Kabul.

Despite enormous challenges, the Kabul Conference has engendered great expectations. We hope that it will serve as an important landmark towards durable stability, peace and development in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has vital stake in stability and peace in Afghanistan.

With Afghanistan Pakistan shares abiding bonds of history, culture, geography, traditions and faith.

Our democratic leadership has demonstrated its unfaltering commitment, friendship, brotherhood and cooperation with Afghanistan.

Our rapidly expanding bilateral ties with Afghanistan have renewed the spirit of trust and confidence.

Pakistan extended its full support to President Hamid Karzai's roadmap, endorsed by the international community at London Conference. We now support his "Renewed Commitment to the Afghan people" articulated earlier today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Pakistan has consistently stressed that stabilization of Afghanistan requires a holistic approach.

We have long held the view that military action alone is not a solution to Afghanistan's current problems. It is essential to pursue political and development tracks, in tandem with the battle against terrorism.

We continue to believe and advocate that the reconciliation and reintegration process has to be broad-based, inclusive, Afghan-owned and Afghan-led, consistent with Afghanistan's social and cultural milieu.

The successful holding of Afghan Consultative Peace Jirga last month was a significant endeavour by President Karzai to evolve domestic political consensus for stability and peace based on harmony and reconciliation. We wish him success in organizing Local Peace Jirgas.

We welcome Afghan Government's commitment to put reconciliation at the top of its peace building policy.

Pakistan is ready to support Afghan government's efforts in this regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The framework for "Transition" of security responsibilities (Inteqal) from NATO to Afghans requires the capacity building of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP). Pakistan is willing to assist Afghanistan in this effort. We believe that 'transition' should be a gradual process based on ground realities and not on calendar and deadlines.

The processes of "transition" and "reconciliation" will be effective if these are supported by sustainable economic development.

The international community has the responsibility to follow an approach of sustained engagement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the visit of Afghan Foreign Minister Dr. Zalmay Rassoul to Islamabad last month, we agreed to evolve institutional frameworks for future cooperation in wide variety of areas.

Pakistan is making an important contribution in Afghanistan's economic and social development. More than 3 million Afghan refugees are still living in Pakistan. Around 28,000 Afghans have graduated from Pakistan in the past three decades. Over 6,000 Afghan students are studying in Pakistani educational institutions at present. Government of Pakistan has provided 2,000 fully funded scholarships to Afghan students.

Pakistan is building large hospitals and university faculties in various parts of Afghanistan. A modern Torkham-Jalalabad dual carriageway will also be completed soon. In addition, both the countries have agreed to build railway links between Peshawar-Jalalabad and Quetta-Kandahar, with international assistance.

Afghanistan is Pakistan's leading trading partner. We are committed to increase the bilateral trade from the present \$ 2 billion to \$ 5 billion by 2015. Agreement, the day before yesterday, on the outstanding issues in the new Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) is truly a historic development which will bring our close brotherly ties with Afghanistan to new heights.

Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed to operationalize the Silk Route CEOs Forum as well as Pakistan-Afghanistan Reconstruction Consortium. These initiatives will bring together private sector companies of the two countries to implement agreed projects with resources allocated by Pakistan or the third country donors who may wish to use local expertise and manpower.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The countries of the region, especially Afghanistan's immediate neighbours have a special responsibility towards this country.

They must pledge not to interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs. They must ensure that their territories are not allowed to be used for destabilizing activities against any country.

There are presently a number of regional mechanisms in place working for the betterment of Afghanistan and regional cooperation. They are making a significant contribution to the peace and stability in Afghanistan.

We feel strongly that there is no need for any new formal or informal regional structures or mechanisms.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the pursuit of stability, peace and development, Pakistan places its full weight behind the agenda and the vision outlined by the Afghan people and their elected leadership.

We will continue to assist the people of Afghanistan in every manner possible.

Thank you.