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~~Afghanistan~~
Pakistan.

Global Conference on Sustainable
Transport

Statement by the Prime Minister

Ashgabat, 26 November 2016

Excellency President Gurbanguly

Berdimuhamedov,

Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-

moon,

Distinguished delegates,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a pleasure to be here again in the beautiful and hospitable city of Ashgabat.

I would like to convey our appreciation to President Berdimuhamedov and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for their vision, leadership and initiative in convening this important Conference. ~~This is indeed a major achievement made possible by bringing together key stakeholders from the Governments, the UN system, international and regional organizations, private sector and civil society, to engage in a dialogue on sustainable~~

~~transport and its multiple roles and linkages in supporting the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).~~

Pakistan attaches great importance to Sustainable Development Goals as they complement our own development priorities. We have already embarked upon the journey for implementation of these goals, which have been integrated in the 'Vision 2025', our national economic and development plan. We are determined to achieve the SDGs well before 2030.

Mr. President,

Our presence here today is also a manifestation of the importance that Pakistan attaches to regional connectivity and infrastructure projects, in view of their tremendous potential and crucial role in advancing our development goals.

In fact these issues have always remained close to my heart. Regional integration and connectivity is one of the key pillars of my Government's policies. It enables us to join hands in pursuing our common objective of bolstering peace and development in our region. This is where Pakistan and other countries of the region have the biggest opportunity to work for the betterment of our people.

Mr. President,

Pakistan is actively participating in various projects launched by the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC). Through CAREC, Central Asia and its neighbours can realize their tremendous potential by promoting regional cooperation in four priority areas – transport, trade facilitation, energy and trade policy. In the new emerging global and regional environment, Pakistan will be happy to serve as the gateway to Central Asia.

Pakistan is also a party to the Inter-Governmental Agreement on Asian Highway Network. We have improved most segments of the Asian Highway Network in our territory in accordance with the Asian Highway Standards. Work on the remaining stretches is also underway on priority basis.

Under the Inter-Governmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network, Pakistan Railways has taken numerous steps to facilitate the rail traffic on segments passing through our territory.

Pakistan is signatory to number of bilateral, regional and international traffic and transit agreements. Pakistan has also acceded to the TIR Convention, as well as the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. We are confident that these arrangements would facilitate promotion of mutually beneficial economic relations with landlocked Central Asian countries.

We are also developing Integrated Transit Trade Management System (ITTMS), which will further promote cross-regional trade. With the support of Asian Development Bank, state of the art facilities are being constructed at Wagha, Torkham and Chaman border points.

Mr. President,

Pakistan is simultaneously promoting regional energy and infrastructure projects, including Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Gas Pipeline Project, CASA-1000 electricity project and Kunnar Power Project.

Mr. President,

In the context of connectivity and regional integration there is now a game changer - China's One Belt - One Road (OBOR) initiative. It aims to create the world's largest platform to integrate development of various regions in the Eurasian landmass. Pakistan, as a partner, is fully committed to this initiative, which will go a long way in realizing our vision of transforming Pakistan into a hub of trade and commerce, and harnessing its geo-strategic location into a geo-economic advantage.

The most promising element of this initiative is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a package of multiple infrastructure and development projects that would boost connectivity in the region, help integrate South Asia, China, Central Asia and the Middle East, and offer opportunities for hundreds of millions of people in this region. CPEC provides the shortest access to our seaports from the Central Asian Republics and Western China.

On 13th November, I was at Gwadar Port to inaugurate the first shipment of goods destined for international markets. It was a historical moment as the first mega trade cargo convoy reached Gwadar from Xinjiang, China, through CPEC. This heralded a new era of regional integration, development and prosperity.

Mr. President,

The 21st century is the century of connectivity. Without adequate internal communication networks and integration with their regions and beyond, countries will risk being left behind in the race for development.

Mr. President,

As we all know, peace and development are inter-linked. Without regional peace and stability, we will not be able to reap the benefits of connectivity and integration. That is why “peaceful neighborhood” is ^a~~another~~ key pillar of our policy.

Settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council is also indispensable for durable peace and stability in South Asia. It is in the interest of both India and Pakistan to normalize and develop relations on the basis of sovereign equality, mutual trust and resolution of all outstanding issues.

Mr. President,

I would like to take this historic opportunity to announce our agreement in principle to join the Ashgabat Agreement as well as Lapis Lazuli corridor. I am positive that this will not only be beneficial to Pakistan but to the entire Central Asian and South Asian regions, and beyond, through integration of economies, markets and more importantly cultures which provide the doorway for peaceful co-existence. I have asked my relevant government ministries to approach the depository countries for an early start of negotiations in this behalf.

Mr. President,

Excellences,

We must, all, work together for creating an environment that would enable us to fully exploit the dividends of our wide-ranging policies and programmes of regional connectivity and integration. This requires mutual understanding and cooperation, as well as bold and visionary leadership. We are confident that with our collective endeavors we will be able to deliver on the promise for peace, security, and prosperity of our peoples.

I thank you.
