



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**Address by
H.E. Mr. Asif Ali Zardari
President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan**

at the

**General Debate of the Sixty-seventh Session
of the United Nations General Assembly**

New York, 25 September 2012



H.E.President Asif Ali Zardari
President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
General Debate 67th Session
United Nations General Assembly
September 25, 2012

Mr. President

Bismilla hirrahmaan irrahim --

Assalam-o-Alaikum -- Peace be upon you.

Before I take up my speech, I want to express the strongest condemnation for the acts of incitement of hate against the faith of billions of Muslims of the world and our beloved prophet, Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him).

Although we can never condone violence, the International community must not become silent observers and should criminalize such acts that destroy the peace of the world and endanger world security by misusing freedom of expression.

Pakistan moves the United Nations to immediately address this alarming concern and bridge the widening rift to enable the comity of nations to be one again.

Mr. President,

I want to congratulate you on your election to this important post.

I want to convey our appreciation of the previous President, His Excellency Nassir Abdulaziz Al Nasser, from our brotherly state of Qatar, who skillfully preceded you.

I would like to further express our appreciation for the laudable work of the honorable Secretary General Ban Ki- Moon. We greatly appreciate his leadership in guiding the work of this organization.

It is a special privilege to be with you today, representing the brave and courageous people of Pakistan.

Globally, we face enormous challenges. But with collective efforts and commitment we can provide a better future to our people.

We must work to end poverty.

We must work to protect the planet, and mitigate climate change.

We must ensure equal rights to all peoples, and protect the weak & vulnerable.

We must pursue justice and fairness for all people.

We must pursue the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

We must save our current and future generations from the horrors of war.

I think of my own three children and the generations of children yet unborn.

They, and all the children of the world, deserve safety, stability, and security.

These goals have guided me throughout my four years in office as President of Pakistan.

These are the goals and principles about which I want to talk to you today.

Mr. President,

Pakistan's engagement with the United Nations lies at the heart of these goals.

We are proud of going above and beyond the call of duty in fulfilling our international responsibilities.

Pakistan has consistently been among the top UN peacekeeping troop contributors for many years.

Today, over 10,000 Pakistani troops proudly wear the UN Blue Helmets in the service of our brothers and sisters around the world.

Mr. President,

Our election to the Security Council reflects our commitment to world peace. It is also a vote of confidence by the international community for Pakistan. The UN represents our common aspirations for peace and development.

However, it needs reform.

The UN system must become more democratic and more accountable. Reform should be based on consensus and democratic principles.

Mr. President,

In the last several years, Pakistan has repeatedly suffered from natural calamities.

The people of Pakistan appreciate the support of the United Nations and the international community.

Mr. President,

Being a democratic country, we believe that legitimate aspirations of any people should be accommodated peacefully and in a manner consistent with sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

We support the rights of the Palestinian people and an independent Palestinian State.

We also favor the admission of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

There are a lot of questions that are asked of Pakistan these days.

I am not here to answer questions about Pakistan.

The people of Pakistan have already answered them.

The politicians of Pakistan have answered them.

The soldiers of Pakistan have answered them.

We have lost over seven thousand Pakistani soldiers and policemen, and over 37,000 civilians.

We have lost our Minister for Minority Affairs, Shahbaz Bhatti and my friend Salmaan Taseer, the Governor of our most populous province of Punjab, to the mindset of extremism.

And I need not remind my friends here today, that I bear a personal scar.

On December 27, 2007 knowing her life was under threat from the mindset she had warned the world against, Pakistan's first elected woman leader and my wife Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was martyred through the bullets and bombs of terrorists.

Terrorism and extremism have destroyed human lives, torn social fabric, and devastated the economy.

Our economy, our lives, our ability to live in the shadow of our Sufi saints and our freedom-loving forefathers have been challenged.

We have responded.

Our soldiers have responded.

So I am not here to answer questions about Pakistan.

I am here to ask some questions on behalf of my people.

On behalf of the two year old baby who was killed in the bombing at Lahore's Moon Market on December 7, 2009.

On behalf of Pervaiz Masih, a Christian Pakistani, who was killed with six others, trying to protect Muslim Pakistanis during a bomb attack on the Islamic University in Islamabad on October 20, 2009.

On behalf of Mr. GHA-YOOR, the Commandant of the Frontier Constabulary police force in Peshawar, who was martyred by militants on August 4, 2010.

On behalf of the traders and businessmen in Peshawar, Quetta, Lahore and Karachi, of the dozens of marketplaces that have been ravaged by multiple bombings. Over and over and over again.

And perhaps most of all, on behalf of my three children, whose mother Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was also martyred by terrorists.

Mr. President,

For more than thirty years, our doors have been open to my Afghan brothers and sisters.

For many years, we were left to fend for ourselves and our Afghan guests.

Mr. President,

I remember the red carpet that was rolled out for all the dictators in our country - dictators who promised the international community the moon - while Pakistan was kept in the dark.

These dictators and their regimes are responsible for suffocating and throttling Pakistan, Pakistan's institutions, and Pakistani democracy.

I remember the judicial execution of Pakistan's first elected leader, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

I remember the jailing of Pakistan's elected leaders.

I remember the twelve years I, myself spent in prison.

And I remember the billions provided by the international community to support those dictatorships.

My country's social fabric, its very character has been altered.

Our condition today is a product of dictatorships.

Mr. President,

No country and no people have suffered more in the epic struggle against terrorism, than Pakistan.

Drone strikes and civilian casualties on our territory add to the complexity of our battle for hearts and minds through this epic struggle.

To those who say we have not done enough, I say in all humility:

Please do not insult the memory of our dead, and the pain of our living.

Do not ask of my people, what no one has ever asked of any other peoples.

Do not demonize the innocent women, and children of Pakistan.

And please, stop this refrain to do more.

The simplest question of all is: How much more suffering can Pakistan endure?

Mr. President,

I am sure the international community does not want any suffering anywhere, least of all in Pakistan.

We believe in fact, that the international community is a partner.

This is because it is the common interest of all nations to work together.

In Pakistan, I have helped bring about a major strategic shift in how we view working together.

Within Pakistan, our democracy has brought about major changes.

InshaAllah, this will be the first civilian government in Pakistan's sixty-six year history to complete its full, five year term.

In this time, Parliament has passed unprecedented reforms.

We have restored the consensus 1973 Constitution.

The National Assembly has enacted wide ranging social reforms.

We have established a National Commission on Women and a National Commission on Human Rights.

We have established for the very first time a truly Independent Election Commission, to ensure free, fair and transparent elections.

Our media is free, uncensored and thriving.

Our civil society is flourishing under the protection of democracy.

We have created the first social safety net through the women of Pakistan for the weak and less privileged. Millions of families have benefitted.

We have aided the poor and at the same time empowered the women of our households.

This safety net is called the Benazir Income Support Program.

These are the gifts of democracy.

This is the dream of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

Mr. President,

The growing regional pivot in Pakistan's foreign policy is a reflection of our democratic policy-making.

In engaging with our region, we are changing the future.

In China our strategic partnership is growing from strength to strength.

In Afghanistan, we have begun to engage and deepen our friendship with the entire range of the Afghan political spectrum.

We believe that a sovereign, stable and secure Afghanistan is good for the Afghan people.

And what is good for the Afghan people is good for Pakistan.

While our hearts and homes remain open to our Afghan brothers, it is imperative that the international community support the three million Afghan refugees in Pakistan in their quest to return home with dignity.

A brighter Afghan future will only be possible when the search for peace is Afghan-owned, Afghan-driven and Afghan-led.

We respect and support the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan for reconciliation and peace.

Pakistan will support in every way possible, any process that reflects Afghan national consensus.

Similarly, we approach our relations with India on mutual trust.

The contacts between our leadership are expanding.

I was encouraged by my discussions with the Prime Minister of India last month in Tehran, who I met for the fifth time in four years.

Mr. President,

Our principled position on territorial disputes remains a bedrock of our foreign policy.

We will continue to support the right of the people of Jammu & Kashmir to peacefully choose their destiny in accordance with the UN Security Council's long-standing resolutions on this matter.

Kashmir remains a symbol of the failures, rather than strengths of the UN system. We feel that resolution of these issues can only be arrived in an environment of cooperation.

By normalizing trade relations we want to create a regional South Asian narrative.

This narrative will provide an environment that will mutually benefit the countries of our region.

Mr. President,

Along this road, there are pitfalls.

One of them is the tendency to respond to failure through blame.

Pakistan does not blame others for the challenges it faces.

We believe we should look for win-win solutions.

Regional cooperation and connectivity will bring us closer and bind us together.

It will make us stakeholders in each other's futures.

Our hosting of a quadrilateral summit next month and our signing of the Afghan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement are proof of this commitment to regional connectivity.

In Pakistan, the lesson we learned, from the last thirty years, is that history cannot be changed.

But the future can -- a future that is brighter, more prosperous and more secure, not only for Pakistanis, but for all people of the region, and indeed the world.

Mr. President,

I must thank the member states of the European Union for recognizing the value of trade to Pakistan.

We seek trade, rather than aid. By granting trade concession to Pakistan, the EU has sent a positive message.

The trade concessions will help us revive the economy and fight terrorism.

Mr. President,

As we embark on this ambitious transformative experience, we are aware that there are threats and pitfalls.

One of them is the spread and illegal trade of heroin.

Despite the presence of international forces in Afghanistan, the size of the heroin trade has increased by 3000% in the last decade. The heroin industry is eroding the social fabric of our societies.

Terrorist activities within our region and indeed all over the world are funded and fueled by the unrestricted production and sale of illegal drugs.

Pakistan has pursued an ambitious agenda to control this menace.

We are coordinating with our neighbors and will hold a conference later this year to develop a unified approach to stamping out this drug trade.

I call upon this august body, and especially those nations represented here who are actively engaged in the region.

In this great hall of international collective action, let us begin this process — here, today, together.

Mr. President, Excellencies, delegates, fellow citizens of the world

I have committed my Presidency and my nation's future to a paradigm shift.

A permanent democratic future for Pakistan. It has not been easy. But nothing worth fighting for is easy.

We long ago stopped thinking of doing what is easy. Instead, we have committed ourselves to doing what is right.

In that regard, I recall the powerful words of my beloved martyred wife and my leader Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto when she appeared before this august body sixteen years ago.

Her words ring out and can guide us into a new future. She said in 1996:

“I dream of a third millennium in which the gap between rich and poor evaporates in which illiteracy, hunger, malnutrition and disease are at last conquered;

I dream of a third millennium in which every child is planned, wanted, nurtured and supported and in which the birth of a girl is welcomed with the same joy as that of a boy.

I dream of a millennium of tolerance and pluralism, in which people respect other people, nations respect other nations, and religions respect other religions.

That is the third millennium I see for my country and all of yours.”

We have made some progress towards achieving these goals.

But so much remains to be done.

In her memory and in the name of God Almighty, Pakistan commits to that path again today.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen, and may peace be upon you, and your countries, and the people of your countries.

Pakistan Zindabad.