

**Statement by
His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif,
Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
during the General Debate of the Sixty-Ninth
Session of the UN General Assembly**

26 September 2014

Mr. President,

I congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa over his election as the President of this Assembly. I assure him that his priorities – revitalization of the General Assembly, sustainable development, climate change and peaceful settlement of disputes – are also our priorities. Our delegation will extend its support to him, to achieve these objectives.

I also pay tribute to Mr. John Ashe for his effective leadership of the past session of the General Assembly.

We commend the Secretary General's efforts to find diplomatic solutions to complex challenges to international peace and security. We appreciate his leadership in hosting a Climate Summit.

Mr. President,

Extreme weather patterns are disrupting world economies. In Pakistan, we have directly experienced such a calamity only recently. The monsoon floods in Pakistan have killed hundreds of people, displaced millions, destroyed and damaged homes, livelihoods, infrastructure, cattle and crops. We are mobilizing all our resources and ingenuity to provide relief and to ensure recovery.

The international community should intensify its efforts to move from awareness to commitments to actions on climate change, which is playing havoc with the economies, particularly in the developing countries.

Mr. President,

This is a defining moment for the United Nations, as it embarks on the task of transforming the lives of billions of people, by investing in sustainable development in the next fifteen years.

We are setting ourselves a vital target of eradicating poverty by 2030. To do that, we need to go beyond the Millennium Development Goals. We need a new approach to eliminate conflict and violence and reduce inequality within and among nations. Only then, we will be able to ensure healthy lives, empower women and girls, improve quality of education, create jobs and guarantee supply of affordable energy.

The time is ripe for such ambition and action. The sustainable development goals crafted so far, must be woven in an overarching framework. We must prioritize them. First things should come first. Peace, stability, and inclusive economic growth – *all come first*.

Mr. President,

At the national level, we have launched our Vision 2025, which puts people *first*. This is inspired by our founding father, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah's vision of a welfare state, based on the principles of justice, equity and responsibility.

In the coming decade, we will develop human and social capital through investment in education, health and gender parity; stimulate sustained economic growth; prioritize energy, water and food security; modernize public sector, and encourage private sector-led entrepreneurship.

We have determined that regional peace and security, political stability in the country, the rule of law and social justice are absolutely crucial for the realization of these goals. Above all, we will continue to work for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Energy is key to economic development. Pakistan co-chairs the Group of Friends of UN Secretary General's initiative on Sustainable Energy for All. The objectives of this initiative are also our national goals.

Mr. President,

It is my government's aspiration and effort to build a peaceful neighborhood by pursuing a policy of constructive engagement.

In South Asia, our people have missed opportunities for prosperity because of unresolved conflicts. We have a choice today: continue with the *status quo* or to seize the moment to resolve all outstanding issues and free up our shared energies for cooperation. To take this course of high statesmanship, we need more, not less, dialogue and diplomacy. We need to respect each other's rights and sensibilities. We must have relationships based on equality, mutual respect and transparency.

We were disappointed at the cancellation of the Foreign Secretary-level talks. The world community, too, rightly saw it as another missed opportunity.

Pakistan is convinced that we must remain engaged in the dialogue process for settling disputes and building economic and trade relations. Let us not ignore the dividends of peace.

Mr. President,

More than six decades ago, the United Nations passed resolutions to hold a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir. The people of Jammu and Kashmir are still waiting for the fulfillment of that promise.

Many generations of Kashmiris have lived their lives under occupation, accompanied by violence and abuse of their fundamental rights. Kashmiri women, in particular, have undergone immense suffering and humiliation.

For decades, attempts have been made, both under UN auspices and bilaterally in the spirit of the Lahore Declaration, to resolve this dispute.

The core issue of Jammu and Kashmir has to be resolved. This is the responsibility of the international community. We cannot draw a veil on the issue of Kashmir, until it is addressed in accordance with the wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistan is ready to work for resolution of this problem through negotiations. Our support and advocacy of the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir is our historic commitment and a duty, as a party to the Kashmir dispute.

Mr. President,

Afghanistan is going through momentous security, political and economic transitions. As always, Pakistan stands in solidarity with the fraternal Afghan people. I congratulate the people of Afghanistan over the successful completion of the electoral process and offer our warm felicitations and good wishes to the new Afghan leadership.

It is our earnest hope that these landmark processes would culminate in the emergence of a stronger, more stable, and unified Afghanistan. We also hope that the process of inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation would move forward, contributing to greater harmony, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

Pakistan remains committed to forging a deeper bilateral relationship with Afghanistan on the basis of equal security and shared prosperity. Our two nations confront common challenges, which call for greater cooperation and understanding between our two nations.

Afghanistan should become a pivot of strategic cooperation, rather than of rivalry. In the past year and a half, we have consciously reached out to Afghanistan to address difficult issues and build on convergences. We have made headway in this effort.

Pakistan continues to host, for the past 30 years, millions of Afghan refugees on its soil. This is the largest refugee caseload in the world. The international community must maintain and enhance support for the repatriation of these refugees and provide for their reintegration in Afghanistan.

To stem drug trafficking, it is important to pursue a comprehensive approach to eliminate poppy cultivation, reinforce border security, and interdict criminals. Pakistan is mainly a victim of drugs transit and trafficking. Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and other states in the region, together with the UN, should step up their efforts to fight this menace.

Pakistan has launched a massive operation to eliminate terrorism. Complementary counter-terrorism measures on the Afghan side of the border are essential to achieve optimal results.

Mr. President,

This past summer, the people of Gaza were subjected to mass atrocities by Israel. We condemned the indiscriminate killings of civilians – which amounted to genocide. From this platform, I once again convey Pakistan's condolences and sympathies to the people of Palestine over their continuing plight.

We welcome the ceasefire between Gaza and Israel. But next steps must also be taken. The blockade of Gaza must be lifted, Palestinian prisoners freed and illegal settlements halted. The United Nations should facilitate a just and lasting solution of the Palestinian issue, based on the relevant UN resolutions.

We call on all parties in Syria to renounce military and militant means and hold dialogue to restore peace and stability in their historic land.

The emergence of new militant entities in the Middle East once again illustrate that terrorism is a global threat. This primitive force in Iraq and Syria is an aberration, which has no sanction of any religion. It must be countered with unified and resolute will.

Mr. President,

We condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We are fighting terrorism planted on Pakistan's soil. Our valiant soldiers are laying down their lives to take out terrorists and tear down their evil networks. The entire nation is behind them.

In the past thirteen years, as a frontline state, we have given enormous sacrifices in blood and resources. Over 50,000 people have lost their lives and thousands have suffered serious injuries. Our economy has lost hundreds of billions of dollars in direct costs and denied investment opportunities.

Yet, in this fight, each time a soldier falls, another takes his place proudly. It is the resolve of our nation to fight this scourge to the finish.

At the same time, we have made a plan of action for the relief and rehabilitation of nearly one million internally displaced persons. This includes a strategy to prevent return and resurgence of militancy and creation of a safe environment for the local population.

Mr. President,

It is important to counter the narrative of extremists. Inter-racial tensions and defamation of religions provide fertile ground for conflict. Constructive and serious dialogue among religions is essential to promote understanding, tolerance and harmony. We remain committed to the UN-led efforts to support these objectives.

Mr. President,

Pakistan's strong commitment to peacekeeping is rooted in our foreign policy and in our belief that every nation should contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. Inspired by this ideal, Pakistan has maintained high levels of participation in the UN peacekeeping, becoming the largest troop contributing country. We are contributing more than 1,100 troops to the Central African Republic, despite the dire situation there.

Mr. President,

As a responsible nuclear weapon state, we will continue to support the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation; and pursue a policy of nuclear restraint and credible minimum deterrence.

Pakistan is not participating in any arms race in the region. Yet we cannot be oblivious to the emerging security scenarios and buildup of armaments. We too, have the obligation to maintain a robust and reliable deterrence.

I would reiterate the need for an inter-linked mechanism for pursuing nuclear restraint, conventional equilibrium and conflict resolution. To promote stability, we are prepared to explore new Confidence Building Measures.

Mr. President,

Pakistan has maintained the highest standards of nuclear safety and security. At the last Summit at The Hague that I attended, Pakistan's recent nuclear measures, especially the establishment of a Centre of Excellence, were appreciated.

Pakistan is a State with advanced nuclear technology, with an experience of more than 40 years. We are a mainstream partner in the international non-proliferation regime. Pakistan also has a stringent national export control system that is fully harmonized with international export control regimes. Though a non-member, we are abiding by their guidelines.

Pakistan ought to be a part of these export control regimes, especially the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Pakistan also qualifies for full access to civil nuclear technology, to overcome its energy shortages and spur economic growth.

Mr. President,

The ongoing UN reform must be comprehensive. We support a reform of the Security Council that would reflect the interests of all members' states – small, medium-sized and large – and not the ambitions of a few. There should be no new permanent seats in the Council. This will be contrary to the democratic character of this world body. We want the Council to become more representative, equitable, accountable and transparent.

Mr. President,

We meet here today on the cusp of a new era for the international community. Never before has the United Nations embraced such lofty goals to banish poverty, stimulate development, protect environment and foster peace, as it will during this session. The future of our planet hinges on our decisions. Let us deliver them with full responsibility and wisdom. Pakistan will assist this Assembly and the United Nations as a whole, to make this world a better place for all mankind.

I thank you.
