

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

30 September 2015

**Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We congratulate Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his election as President of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly. It is an acknowledgement of your distinguished career in public service. We share your commitment to action towards building a more just and stable world.

We also pay tribute to Mr. Sam Kutesa for his able stewardship of the 69th Session.

Mr. President,

Seventy years ago, the United Nations was created from the ruins of the most devastating war the world has witnessed.

Its purpose was to build universal peace and prosperity on the basis of equitable principles, cooperation and collective action.

Despite the constraints of the Cold War, the United Nations served the international community as the beacon of hope; the repository of freedom; an advocate of the oppressed; a vehicle for development and progress.

But, we – the peoples of the United Nations – have not succeeded in beating our arms into ploughshares or promoting universal prosperity and larger freedoms.

Confrontation has returned between major powers at a time when many parts of the world are in turmoil. Terrorism is spreading.

Poverty and deprivation have yet to be overcome. Gross violations of human rights are rampant.

We are witnessing human dislocation – refugees and forced migrants – on a scale not witnessed for over half a century.

Our very existence is threatened by the wanton damage done to our planet's life sustaining systems.

Yet **Mr. President**, this is also a moment of opportunity.

Today, our interdependent world possesses the financial, scientific and organizational capabilities to address these diverse and interrelated challenges that pose a common threat to all member states.

At the historic Summit over the weekend, we have collectively committed ourselves to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals, to promote equitable and inclusive development for all our peoples.

The real challenge remains – to mobilize the collective political will and resources to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the agenda we have solemnly endorsed.

Pakistan has already initiated action on national goals to promote the Post-2015 Development Agenda. We are also creating a robust mechanism for the monitoring and implementation of these goals and targets.

Mr. President,

Later this year in Paris, we will need to respond with common but differentiated responsibility to the threat posed by Climate Change.

Partisan interests must not stand in the way of an ambitious and collective commitment to halt and reverse the damage done to our planet.

Mr. President,

On the 70th anniversary of the UN, we should strive to adapt this world organization so as to respond effectively to the current and emerging challenges that confront us all.

Pakistan supports a comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including that of the Security Council.

We need a Security Council that is more democratic, representative, accountable and transparent.

A Council that reflects the interests of all member states, in accordance with the principle of sovereign equality. Not a Council, which is an expanded club of the powerful and privileged.

Mr. President,

Peacekeeping has been one of the key responsibilities of the United Nations.

Pakistan is proud of its historic and current role as a major troop contributor. We regard it as our obligation to uphold international peace and security.

Mr. President,

Pakistan is the primary victim of terrorism. We have lost thousands of lives including civilians and soldiers to terrorist violence.

The blood that has been shed – including that of our innocent children – has reinforced our resolve to eliminate this scourge from our society. We will fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, irrespective of who their sponsors are.

Our Operation, Zarb-e-Azb, is the largest anti-terrorism campaign against terrorists anywhere, involving over 180,000 of our security forces. It has made substantial progress in cleansing our country of all terrorists and will conclude only when our objective has been accomplished.

This Operation is complemented by an all-inclusive National Action Plan. It encompasses police and security actions, political and legal measures and social and economic policy packages, aimed at countering violent extremism.

The global threat of terrorism cannot be defeated unless we address its underlying causes. Poverty and ignorance are part of the problem. Extremist ideologies must be opposed.

But the narrative of the terrorists also has to be countered through the just resolution of the several instances of oppression and injustice against Muslims in various parts of the world.

Unfortunately, some seek to use the global campaign against terrorism to suppress the legitimate right of occupied peoples to self-determination.

Mr. President,

The rise and spread of terrorism across the Middle East today poses unprecedented security challenges.

Wracked by violence, ethnic and sectarian conflicts, and the rise of Daesh, several countries of the region are today the vortex of conflict and instability. Others are being sucked into this quagmire.

The tragedy of Palestine has intensified. The accepted avenue for peace between Palestine and Israel – a two state solution – appears further away today than ever before, due to the intransigent stance of the occupying power.

Yet as I speak the proud Palestinian flag is being raised just outside this hall. We hope this is just the first step. We look forward to welcoming Palestine as a full member of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

Muslims are suffering across the world: Palestinians and Kashmiris oppressed by foreign occupation; persecuted minorities; and the discrimination against Muslim refugees fleeing persecution or war.

The international community must redress these injustices against the Muslim people.

Mr. President,

We welcome the comprehensive nuclear agreement reached between Iran and the P-Five plus One.

This shows what diplomatic engagement and multilateralism can achieve. It augurs well for the peace and security of our region and beyond

Mr. President,

Pakistan-Afghan relations underwent a positive transformation after the advent of the National Unity Government in Kabul.

In response to the request from the Afghan Government and with the support of the international community, Pakistan made strenuous efforts to facilitate the process of Afghan reconciliation. Dialogue did open between the Afghan Government and the Taliban, which was an unprecedented first.

But it was unfortunate that certain developments stalled the process. Thereafter, militant attacks intensified, which we unequivocally condemn.

Pakistan will persist in the endeavor to help resume the dialogue process and promote peace and stability in Afghanistan.

We can, however, do so only if we receive the required cooperation from the Afghan government. Tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan are in neither country's interests.

We are encouraged that the international community, including the major powers, desire continuation of the peace process in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

Pakistan greatly appreciates China's proactive role in promoting peace and prosperity in Afghanistan and our region.

We welcome China's vision of "One Belt, One Road".

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, announced during President Xi Jinping's visit to Pakistan earlier this year will spur regional economic integration and bring prosperity to the entire region and beyond.

This is an inspiring model of South-South cooperation that should be emulated.

We also welcome Russia's greater focus on Asian cooperation. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which Pakistan will be joining this year as a full member, holds great promise for promoting regional connectivity.

Mr. President,

The history of South Asia is one of missed opportunities. Among its dire consequences is the persistence of poverty and deprivation in our region.

Development is my Government's first priority and has underpinned my policy to build a peaceful neighbourhood.

Our peoples need peace to prosper. Peace can be achieved through dialogue, not disengagement.

In 1997 when the Composite Dialogue was launched with India, our two countries agreed that this would encompass two principal items: Kashmir and Peace and Security, along with six other issues, including terrorism.

The primacy and urgency of addressing these two issues is even more compelling today.

Consultations with Kashmiris, who are an integral part of the dispute, are essential to evolving a peaceful solution.

Since 1947, the Kashmir dispute has remained unresolved.

UN Security Council resolutions have remained unimplemented.

Three generations of Kashmiris have only seen broken promises and brutal oppression. Over 100,000 have died in their struggle for self-determination.

This is the most persistent failure of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

When I assumed office of the Prime Minister of Pakistan in June 2013, for the third time, one of my first priorities was to normalize relations with India. I reached out to the Indian leadership to emphasize that our common enemy was poverty and underdevelopment.

Cooperation, not confrontation, should define our relationship.

Yet today ceasefire violations along the Line of Control and the Working Boundary are intensifying, causing civilian deaths including women and children.

Wisdom dictates that our immediate neighbor refrains from fomenting instability in Pakistan. The two countries should address and resolve the causes of tension and take all possible measures to avert further escalation.

That is why I want to use the opportunity today to propose a new peace initiative with India, starting with measures that are the simplest to implement:

One, we propose that Pakistan and India formalize and respect the 2003 understanding for a complete ceasefire on the Line of Control in Kashmir. For this purpose, we call for UNMOGIP's expansion to monitor the observance of the ceasefire.

Two, we propose, that Pakistan and India reaffirm that they will not resort to the use or the threat of use of force under any circumstances. This is a central element of the UN Charter.

Three, steps be taken to demilitarize Kashmir.

Four, agree to an unconditional mutual withdrawal from Siachen Glacier, the world's highest battleground.

An easing of threat perceptions through such peace efforts will make it possible for Pakistan and India to agree on a broad range of measures to address the peril posed by offensive and advanced weapons systems.

Pakistan neither wants to, nor is it engaged in, an arms race in South Asia. We cannot however remain oblivious to the evolving security dynamics and arms buildup in our region, which obliges us to take essential steps to maintain our security.

As a responsible nuclear weapon state, Pakistan will continue to support the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We have maintained the highest standards of nuclear security and have established an effective regime to ensure the safety and security of our nuclear facilities and stocks.

South Asia needs strategic stability and this requires serious dialogue to achieve nuclear restraint, conventional balance and conflict resolution.

Finally Mr. President,

We look forward to playing our part to build a brighter era of peace and prosperity in South Asia. We owe it to our people and to succeeding generations.

I thank you **Mr. President.**