



**INSTITUTE OF
STRATEGIC STUDIES**

web: www.issi.org.pk
phone: +92-920-4423, 24
fax: +92-920-4658

Report- Public Talk
Pakistan-Hungary Relations

July 25, 2016

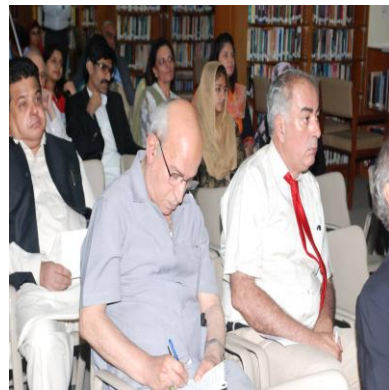


Compiled by: Arhama Siddiqua

Edited by: Najam Rafique

Pictures from the Event





Pakistan-Hungary Relations

The Institute of Strategic Islamabad (ISSI) organised a Public Talk on “Pakistan–Hungary Relations” under its Ambassador’s Platform series on July 25, 2016. The distinguished speakers at the occasion were, H.E. Mr. Istvan Szabo Ambassador of Hungary to Pakistan; Mr. Afzaal Akhtar, Head of Business Support, MOL, a Hungarian Oil & Gas Company and Mr. Ali Murtaza Abbas, Group Regional Advisor Middle East and Africa, MOL.

Ambassador Istvan Szabo affirmed that the Pakistan-Hungary relationship has many aspects. Providing a brief history of the relationship between the two countries, he said that these ties have been laid on a firm, emotional, intellectual and practical foundation of the mutual contacts that have evolved since the independence of Pakistan. The Ambassador stated that ever since official ties were established in 1965, both countries have succeeded in building a growing and enduring relationship that thrives on the basis of trust, confidence and mutual respect. Hungary looks upon Pakistan as an essential power to safeguard peace and security in a highly important, but inherently volatile part of the world. He went on to say that the Hungarian Government appreciates and supports the efforts of the Government of Pakistan to strengthen regional peace and security and to suppress terrorist activities which further bolster the issues of illegal, unchecked and non-regularised mass migration.

The Ambassador mentioned how in line with the Hungarian Southern Opening policy, the government is focusing on enhancing bilateral cooperation with Pakistan. The Hungarian Embassy’s trade attaché through ties with various counterparts in Pakistan has tried to enhance economic ties. Giving examples of the good arrangements and highly developed infrastructure, he went on to give statistics about the Hungarian economy and why it is becoming an attractive destination for doing business. Ambassador Sabzo stated that Pakistan is considered to be a medium-sized trading partner of Hungary. The trade volume between the countries has had fluctuations which is why the primary goal is to enhance trade activity between the countries. He said that Pakistan is a very challenging market and only financially strong companies can manage their activities here. Education is a priority area as well in which MoUs have been signed by both the countries in higher educational and scientific exchange programmes. The Ambassador pointed out that the Hungarian Government

has also recently offered 80 scholarships for Pakistani students in Hungarian institutions of higher education, and they plan to increase this figure to 200 by 2017.

He paid glowing tribute to Mr. Agha Shahi former foreign secretary and minister, for promotion and enhancement of relations between Pakistan and Hungary. He applauded Pakistan's efforts during the 1956 Revolution and Freedom fight in Hungary and made special mention of Mr. Agha Shahi who was the deputy head of the Pakistani UN mission during the war.

The Ambassador laid emphasis on the importance of cultural diplomacy and gave numerous examples of how the Hungarian Embassy has been connecting cultural and business events and holding various exhibitions throughout the country. Regarding contemporary ties, he remarked that the two countries shared cordial political ties. The common goal of both countries is to enhance economic and trade cooperation as can be seen by the various economic exchanges between the two countries.

Earlier in his welcome remarks, Ambassador Masood Khan, Director General ISSI paid tribute to Ambassador Szabo and called him a multilateralist. He talked about how Hungary is playing a very pivotal role in European politics. He said that Hungary has always been a friendly country towards Pakistan and both countries have maintained good political ties and are trying to forge even closer economic and trade cooperation. Ambassador Masood acknowledged how the Hungarian government has always provided valuable assistance in times of crisis, and pointed out that one crucial sector for cooperation for both countries has been energy. He also pointed out how MOL, a Hungarian Oil & Gas Company, alone has invested \$2 billion in exploration of new oil and gas fields in Pakistan, and is meeting 14 percent of the country's energy requirements.

During their presentation about the work of MOL, its representatives Mr. Afzaal Akhtar and Mr. Ali Abbas presented the company's profile and projects in Pakistan. They cited how, for MOL, Pakistan is a core country and is considered a success story which they have emulated in various other countries. Since MOL works in areas of extreme poverty, it has tried to establish schools in those areas to provide tertiary, primary, as well as professional education and is working towards setting up vocational

institutes as well. The company has also tried to participate in disaster management as a corporate social responsibility.

During the Q&A session, it was suggested that a public diplomacy initiative be launched so that there is awareness about the work being done by MOL. Simultaneously, perceptions in both the countries can also be improved by taking this action. While answering another question on economic and trade cooperation, the Ambassador informed the audience about the present state of the Hungarian economy and again lay emphasis on the importance of forging closer economic ties.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman Board of Governors of ISSI, in his concluding remarks underlined that Pakistan highly values friendly relations with Hungary, and is committed to strengthening ties and enhancing long-lasting cooperation. He praised MOL's constructive role in Pakistan and applauded how it had shattered the distorted impression of the country not being safe for investment.