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Report - In-House Meeting
with
**“Chinese delegation from the Counselors’
Office of the State Council”**

December 6, 2018



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Pictures of the Event





The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) held an In-House Meeting with a Chinese delegation from the Counselors' Office of the State Council (COSC) on December 6, 2018. The members of the delegation included: Mr. Zhang Yantong, Vice Chairman of the COSC; Mr. Zhang Ying, Chairman of the Counselors' Office of Yunnan Province; Mr. Li Yang, Division Chief of Department of International Exchanges and Cooperation of the COSC; Mr. He Maochun and Mr. Xiabin.

Welcoming the delegation, Director General ISSI Ambassador (Retd) Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry introduced the members of ISSI participating in the meeting.

Mr. Zhang Yantong thanked Ambassador Aizaz for hosting them and said that it was truly an honor to be in Islamabad. Introducing the COSC, he stated that it acts as an advisory organization for the Chinese government and directly communicates with the Chinese Premier. He applauded the role played by ISSI in promoting the significance of China-Pakistan relationship. He added that the purpose of his visit was to enhance the engagement of the Counselor's Office with ISSI. This would help in improving their understanding of Pakistan and promote people to people contact.

Ms. Uroosa Khan, Associate Editor at ISSI's China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) gave a short introduction of ISSI to the delegation, and briefed them on the activities and research work carried out at the Institute.

The introduction was followed by an overview of China-Pakistan relations and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) by Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director, CPSC. He elaborated the political, strategic and economic aspects of this relationship along with the significance of CPEC for both the countries.

Sharing his perspectives of the present state of global affairs, Ambassador Chaudhry mentioned that the United States is treating Russia and China as its competitors and President Trump is searching for ways to intensify his country's rivalries. He added that growing nationalism in the west; protectionist trends; and anti-immigration stance by western governments pose danger to global peace.

He also shared his thoughts on Pakistan's relations with its neighboring countries. Highlighting the importance of Pakistan's friendship with China, Ambassador Chaudhry said that the two countries have remained close to each other for seventy years, and will continue to do so despite pressure from the US. He stressed that Pakistan wants to have good ties with both US and China and is seeking a win-win solution. He pointed out that both countries have always supported each other and that this relationship will always remain strong. He expressed his delight over State Council's decision to send a delegation to Pakistan.

Explaining the poor state of ties with India, Ambassador Chaudhry said that India should acknowledge Pakistan's efforts in the fight against terror and also show seriousness towards resolving the Kashmir issue. He stressed that both countries should resolve their issues through dialogue.

Briefing the delegation on the situation in Afghanistan, Ambassador Chaudhry said that Pakistan is striving to bring peace in Afghanistan as it will serve Pakistan's interest as well. He pointed out the harsh consequences faced by Pakistan post the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. He stressed that China and Pakistan need to work together to address the issues in Afghanistan and prevent terrorist outfits from establishing themselves in the ungoverned parts of the country.

Ambassador Chaudhry stated that Iran is a very important country in the region. He expressed his concern regarding the ongoing dispute between Iran and Saudi Arabia and informed the delegation about Pakistan's efforts to diffuse tension between the two countries. The ambassador added that the termination of the Iran nuclear deal was an unfortunate development and it has also impeded prospects of regional economic integration.

Sharing his opinion on the international order, Mr. Zhang Yantong said that some countries are reluctant to adapt to the new development trends. He explained that previously the global order was dominated by a few developed countries, but now developing countries are catching up and also gaining political influence. Based on its geographical location, Pakistan has a crucial role in regional politics. Pakistan is also important for China because it wants to expand its relationship with Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries.

He emphasized that economics is a key aspect of this relationship and posited that CPEC will be beneficial for both the countries. He stressed that Pakistan should work to optimize the benefits of CPEC as it is a rare opportunity. He added that China took advantage of the industrial change taking place in developed countries, and Pakistan has been presented with a similar opportunity due to the industrial change taking place in China.

Mr. Xiabin opined that the global order has not been the same since the 2008 financial crisis. He asserted that 21st century belongs to Asia and its countries will gain more influence in the coming years. He expressed his optimism regarding Pakistan's economic rise as well.

Sharing his personal experiences, Mr. He Maochun said that he has visited 181 countries, but there is no better country than Pakistan for the people of China. Responding to Ambassador Chaudhry's earlier remarks, he said that we do not see United States as our rival and would like to improve our ties. He emphasized that China will always play a responsible role in global development.

Addressing a question regarding the challenges posed to CPEC, Ambassador Chaudhry stated that not everyone is happy about the progress of CPEC and some elements are spreading disinformation. However, both countries have shown a strong resolve to counter any threats.

Concluding the meeting, Chairman BOG ISSI, Ambassador (Retd) Khalid Mahmood appreciated the work done by COSC in strengthening the ties between the two countries. He added that the relationship between the two countries has strengthened with the passage of time. He divulged that he was present at the time when Pakistan supported People's Republic of China to be the rightful representative at the United Nations.

Mr. Zhang Yantong appreciated his comments and said that the people of China will always remember this act.