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Issue Brief

Pakistan-US Strategic Dialogue: Review of the 7th Round of the Working Group on Security, Strategic Stability and Non- Proliferation

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In continuation of the Pakistan-US Strategic Dialogue which was resumed in 2013 after its discontinuation in 2011, the dialogue's Working Group on Security, Strategic Stability and Nuclear Non-proliferation (SSS&NP) met in Washington D.C. on June 2, 2015 for its 7th round to discuss issues of concern to both the states regarding strategic stability and nuclear non-proliferation.

Seventh SSS&NP Meeting: Highlights

The 7th round of the Working Group on SSS&NP was led by Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry including members from the Foreign Office and the Strategic Plans Division. The group on the US side was headed by Rose Eilene Gottemoeller, the US Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security. Discussion by the group focused specifically on a range of issues related to strategic stability in South Asia, including non-proliferation, civil nuclear cooperation, and other areas of nuclear safety, security and strategic stability.

The core agenda of discussions revolved around efforts for integrating Pakistan into the international non-proliferation regime; working together for the prevention of proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1540. ¹ While the US side resolved to continue efforts for negotiations on Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty and seek congressional approval for the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), Pakistan emphasised its commitment to credible minimum deterrence and a broader FMCT that would address the asymmetries according to its national security interests and the objectives of strategic stability in South Asia aimed at building confidence and lessening the risk of armed conflict in the region. International efforts to improve nuclear security through high level forums like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Nuclear Security Summit (NSS), and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT), were also discussed. The SSS&NP Working Group hoped that the NSS in 2016 would result in more robust nuclear security architecture, and expressed their aspiration to ratify the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) in accordance with national laws and procedures. ² Pakistan's hosting of IAEA training activities at its Nuclear Center of Excellence and efforts to strengthen exports controls and border security through installation of radiation portals at border crossings were also welcomed by the US side. The Pakistan delegation appreciated the understanding reached between P5+1 and Iran in April this year, and stressed its need for access to peaceful nuclear technology as a socio-economic imperative. ³

The emphasis of the discussions by SSS&NP Working Group was on clarifying the postures of Pakistan and the US on security and nuclear stability issues ahead of the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit.

No doubt, the very fact that Pakistan and the United States have decided to restart the Strategic Dialogue process is a recognition that both have a desire to use this forum to work together to reduce the levels of mistrust that had crept up in their relationship post 2011.

Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry clearly stated that Pakistan would not sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty given its security concerns vis-à-vis India. ⁴ It is encouraging to note that the US side expressed full confidence in Pakistan's efforts to strengthen nuclear security, and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's efforts to promote stability and explore new confidence building measures in South Asia. As a sign of growing confidence, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has also been invited by President Barack Obama to visit Washington later this year.

This will certainly be an excellent opportunity for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to make a fresh exchange of views with the American leadership for integrating Pakistan into the international export control

regimes, notably the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and for transfer of civil nuclear technology to the country on a non-discriminatory basis. We have to redress current energy deficit and take urgent steps to double our present installed capacity. Despite such ambitious approach, there would still be shortage, and therefore we would need to generate at least 40,000 MW through nuclear plants to fill this gap and to meet growing consumer, agricultural, and industrial demands.

The safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear programme has already been recognised by the international community, including the Nuclear Security Summit held in Hague in 2014. The Americans too have shown some understanding of Pakistan's energy needs, which has been evident in the renewed Strategic Dialogue process through its support and assistance in various energy projects in Pakistan. There is a need to carry this momentum forward by developing Pakistan's energy sector through an affordable mix of all sources: thermal, renewable, *and* nuclear, if its economy is to grow at a rapid pace.

Notes and References:

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- ¹ UNSC Resolution 1540 establishes legally binding obligations on all UN member states to have and enforce appropriate and effective measures against WMDs, their delivery systems, and establishing controls.
 - ² The Convention applies to nuclear material used for peaceful purposes while in international nuclear transport. However, it does not apply to nuclear materials used for military purposes or to those used for peaceful purposes but not in international transport.
 - ³ *Joint Statement Between Pakistan and United States on Security, Strategic Stability, and Nonproliferation Issues*, June 3, 2015, US Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/06/243127.htm>
 - ⁴ "Pakistan Will Not Sign NPT, Says Foreign Secretary", *Dawn*, June 3, 2015.