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Report – Seminar

“Pakistan's Relations with Central Asian Republics and Azerbaijan: Prospects and Challenges”

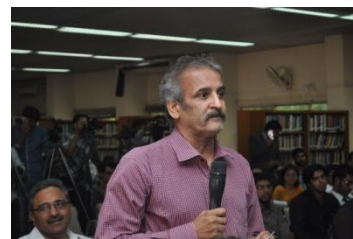
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Pictures of the Event



A seminar to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan, Central Asian Republics (CARs) and Azerbaijan was held at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) in collaboration with the Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies (IPDS) on May 11, 2017. Ms. Tehmina Janjua, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan was the chief guest at the occasion. The other participants of the seminar included; H. E. Mr. Ali Alizada, Ambassador of Azerbaijan, H. E. Mr. Erik Beishembiev, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan, H. E. Mr. Atadjan Movlamov, Ambassador of Turkmenistan; H.E. Mr. Furqat A. Sadikov, Ambassador of Uzbekistan; Mr. Darkhan Nursadykov, Representative of the Ambassador of Kazakhstan, Dr. Sarfraz Khan, Director Area Study Centre, Peshawar University and Ms. Farhat Asif, President IPDS.

In his welcome remarks Mr. Najam Rafique, Director Research and Americas, welcomed the honourable chief guest, the distinguished speakers and the guests. He suggested that though we celebrate the 25th year of our diplomatic relations with Central Asian States and Azerbaijan, the linkages with these states are both cultural and historical. Many people in Pakistan trace their ancestral roots to Central Asian States. These historical ties have found a high place in our poetry and literature. Current ties between Pakistan and Central Asian Republics have now been established in numerous fields including science and technology, information technology, pharmaceuticals, tourism and media. The most important in this regard are CASA 1000 and the TAPI gas pipeline projects. There is also a growing cooperation seen in war against terror, combating religious extremism and drug trafficking. He was of the opinion that Pakistan and Central Asian States are also members of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) which has provided several opportunities to the head of states to meet on the sidelines to further cement their bilateral relations. In this regard, Pakistan now looks forward to becoming a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in June 2017. He said that Pakistan has played an important role in curbing terrorism and looks forward to working closely with CARs and Azerbaijan for a peaceful solution in Afghanistan, which is very important for our future bilateral relations.

Ms Tehmina Janjua, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan said that leadership from Pakistan and the Central Asian Republics is moving together to work closely to form a unified partnership for the rest of the world to gain experience. Ms. Tehmina Janjua talked about the success of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) summit held in Islamabad in March, 2017, where the Islamabad Declaration was adopted unanimously as a dynamic concept. Pakistan was honoured with the presence of the leadership from all the countries of ECO. With reference to the energy shortfall in Pakistan, she thanked the CARs for their increased cooperation in this sector and said that only families share within family. She said that the Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan have abundant energy resources, therefore, TAPI gas pipeline and Central Asia-South South Asia power project (CASA 1000) are important for Pakistan's energy sector. Ms. Janjua went on to highlight the special efforts being made for regional connectivity including a number of time-bound mega projects, which are already in the implementation stage. She stressed that an integrated region leads to an environment where diversities can be channelled into collective strength. Pakistan strongly believed in regional integration and has been successfully maintaining the excellent political relations with all the regional countries. She stressed on regional connectivity and said that non availability of direct land and air route to Azerbaijan and Central

Asian States weakens the linkages between the people. She also welcomed the diplomats from Central Asia and Azerbaijan for their training in Pakistan's Foreign Services Academy.

H.E. Mr. Ali Alizada, Ambassador of Azerbaijan talked about the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan and called them time tested. He acknowledged that Pakistan was one of the first countries that recognised the independence of Azerbaijan and condemned the Armenian aggression. He reiterated Azerbaijan's support for Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, and suggested that it should be resolved under the UN resolutions on Kashmir. He talked about the warm and sincere relations between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. He said that Pakistan has always supported Azerbaijan since its independence and also helped the country financially in its difficult times. And now, Azerbaijan and Pakistan are supporting each other on international forums with a strong strategic partnership. He congratulated Pakistan for hosting a very successful summit of ECO in Islamabad. He said that Azerbaijan and Pakistan have good understanding on ECO, and there are many more opportunities to develop a strong relationship. He told the audience that Azerbaijan embassy has simplified the visa procedure for Pakistanis. Visa can be acquired through an online process and one can stay for 30 days. He also anticipated that both Pakistan and Azerbaijan can achieve a lot more by the cooperation of their leaders. He appreciated the strong relations between the two in the absence of misunderstandings, and said that there are no obvious challenges to their relations. He said that the people and government of Azerbaijan wish the stability and development of Pakistan and we are witnessing the stability and progress of Pakistan over the last few years.

H.E. Mr. Erik Beishembiev, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan, gave a brief overview of Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan relations. Pakistan is one of the first countries which recognised Kyrgyzstan and signed the protocol of diplomatic relations. He said that ever since bilateral relations were established between Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan, a number of visits have taken place between the leadership of both countries. He said that though full bilateral trade and economic potential has not yet reached a significant level, there is a noticeable revival in regional cooperation between the two countries as is evident from the active participation in this year's ECO Summit. He said that CASA 1000 agreement is designed to supply electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to provide electricity to Pakistan and Afghanistan. He went on to say that Kyrgyzstan has no disagreements with Pakistan on any forum. The active participation of Kyrgyzstan's Prime Minister in ECO summit in March 2007 in Islamabad shows the level of relations between the two countries. He said that at the end of the ECO Summit, the Islamabad Declaration was adopted which included a number of agreements between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan in the sector of energy and transport. Kyrgyzstan does not have any disagreement with Pakistan on any issue.

H. E. Mr. Atadjan Movlamov, Ambassador of Turkmenistan talked about the strong relations between Central Asian countries and Pakistan. He appreciated Pakistan's support to the Central Asian States at the time of their independence. Pakistan was one of the first countries who supported the independence of the Central Asian States. He said that both countries have always maintained active diplomatic relations and have established a strong relationship in a vast number of arenas such as education, health and energy. Both have signed many bilateral agreements on trade and other sectors. He also appreciated Pakistan for supporting the neutrality of Turkmenistan in the ECO Summit in 1995 in Islamabad and the declaration of Turkmenistan as a neutral state by the UN. He highlighted the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-

Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project and called it a striking example of long-term regional cooperation which will take trade and economic cooperation to new heights. He said that the TAPI project has made good progress in recent times.

H. E. Mr. Furqat A. Sadikov, Ambassador of Uzbekistan spoke on Uzbekistan-Pakistan relations. Pakistan, he said, was the first country to open its embassy in Uzbekistan and recognized the independence of Uzbekistan. He said that Prime Nawaz Sharif paid a visit to Uzbekistan in 2015 and opened a new era of relationship between the two countries. He highlighted the strong cultural values and historical ties. Allama Iqbal, Ghalib and other poets are very popular and well read in Uzbekistan. He particularly highlighted the cooperation in the field of agriculture. Currently, Uzbekistan agriculture companies are already working on the improvement of cotton and other agriculture products in Pakistan, including the agriculture machineries in Multan. Uzbekistan recognized Pakistan as the main strategic partner in the region and acknowledged Pakistan's role in fighting terrorism. He said that more than 57 Pakistani companies are operating in Uzbekistan and promoting trade between the two countries. Trade of textile, leather goods and pharmaceuticals are prominent. Uzbekistan will start a direct flight from Lahore to Tashkent in order to have a direct contact to promote the tourism and trade.

Dr. Sarfraz Khan discussed the trade relations between Pakistan and CARs. He also highlighted the bilateral visits that have taken place between these countries and hoped that diplomatic relations with Pakistan would continue to grow in new areas which have not yet been covered already. He suggested that to further improve these relations, a proper agenda and road map should be devised in the near future. He talked about the challenges faced by Azerbaijan and CARs. He reaffirmed that Pakistan was the first to recognise these states. However, there is a question mark on the economic cooperation, trade and other relations. Pakistan's political and diplomatic relations with the CARs is admirable but needs to improve their trade relations.

Mr. Darkhan Nursadykov, representative of the Ambassador of Kazakhstan said that with the support of Pakistan, Kazakhstan has been elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the period of 2017-2018. He greeted Pakistan on reaching the final stage of becoming a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and hoped that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would expand to include the CARs, and particularly, Kazakhstan. He said that Kazakhstan and Pakistan are actively participating and cooperating on international and regional matters.

In her concluding remarks, Ms. Farhat Asif, President, Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies (IPDS), said that the aims and goals of her institute are to establish Pakistan-SCO friendship forum to cooperate in education, energy, empowerment and promote the communities of these countries. As we are celebrating 25 years of collaboration and we are culturally linked and we can transform these relations through increased people-to-people and business-to-business contacts for which direct linkages should be established. She said that we have seen the projects like CASA 1000 and TAPI working and which will strengthen our relations with Azerbaijan and CARs. The transformation of relations during the ECO Summit in Islamabad in March 2017 was widely witnessed. She suggested that there should be exchange programmes between Pakistan and CARs. The professors, researchers and journalists must come here from CARs and Azerbaijan and vice versa. Ms. Asif said that broader people-to-people contacts can help

strengthen the already strong relationship. She said that challenges are there, but an active collaboration and cooperation could help overcome all these challenges as our relationship is not twenty-five years old but centuries old.