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Report – In-House Meeting

6-Member Chinese Delegation from Chinese Peoples Association for Peace and Disarmament (CPAPD)

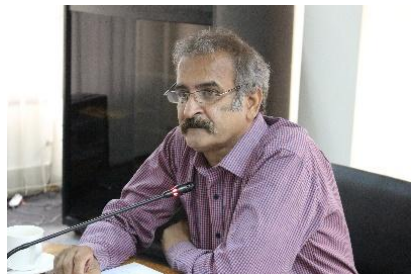
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Pictures of the Event



The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted an In-House Meeting on May 14, 2018, with a 6-member Chinese delegation from Chinese Peoples Association for Peace and Disarmament, (CPAPD). The delegation was led by Mr. Zhou Li, Vice President, CPAPD & Vice Minister of the International Department, Central Committee of CPC. Other members of the delegation included: Ms. Lin Li, Research Fellow, CPAPD, Mr. Hou Hongyu, Associate Research Fellow, CPAPD, Ms. He He, Program Officer, Ms. Wang Qing, Program Officer and Ms. Niu Na, Program Officer.

The Chairman ISSI, Ambassador (Retd.) Khalid Mahmood, welcomed the distinguished guests and said that with great transformation taking place globally, the relationship between the two countries has not been affected. If anything, the bilateral relationship has constantly been on an upward curve, which has been possible because the relationship is based on deep mutual trust and respect. He further said that the upsurge in this relationship has been witnessed by some of the initiatives, particularly the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) signed between the governments of both the countries. Ambassador Mahmood said that keeping in view the significance of the bilateral relations, the ISSI established a China-Pakistan Study Centre for dedicated and in-depth study of CPEC and the broader Pakistan-China relations.

Mr. Zhou Li thanked the Chairman for hosting the meeting and talked at length on the significance of China-Pakistan relations. He said that the upsurge in the bilateral relation got an impetus with the historic visit of President Xi Jinping to Pakistan in 2015, and later when the national leaders of both the countries committed to further strengthen the ties when they met at the Belt and Road Forum in 2017. Mr. Zhou further said that in the upcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting scheduled in June 2018, new commitments will be made to strengthen cooperation between the two countries. He said that the future of bilateral relation between the two countries is very bright.

Giving a short brief on CPAPD, Mr. Zhou said that it was established in 1985, and it has now established contacts with 300 organizations in 90 countries to work and strive to maintain peace in the world.

Giving an overview of CPEC, Mr. Zhou said that cooperation in this regard is based on mutual interests of both the countries and the progress in the projects initiated under this cooperation is

reflective of the strong commitments shown by Pakistan, who has always been a reliable partner to China.

Mr. Zhou asked about the public expectations in Pakistan about CPEC and the challenges it faces ahead. He was also keen to know about the domestic political situation in the country?

Responding to the questions, Chairman ISSI said that CPEC has been warmly welcomed in Pakistan as it is a project which will benefit the country and transform the economy in the long run. He further said that as Pakistan is a federation, so there had been difference of opinions among different stakeholders, which have now been sorted out through consultation between the provinces and the Government at the centre along with their Chinese counterparts. There is complete commitment at every level in Pakistan to make CPEC a success. If anything, he said, there is an opposition from India, which with its short-sighted policy, has always tried to sabotage CPEC. Also, the attitude of the US has not been very supportive, but Pakistan hopes that it will eventually come around as this project is not directed against any country, and in future, with the success of CPEC, it will not only benefit China and Pakistan, but also the entire region.

Dr. Ahmad Rashid Malik, Director, China-Pakistan Study Centre presented an overview of the progress of CPEC projects in Pakistan. He informed the delegation that CPEC is an integral part and one of the 6 corridors being built under China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. On CPEC, he specifically said that this project will connect China's developing western region with Pakistani ports and economy. He stressed that CPEC is not just a road project, but it involves construction of railway links, energy projects, economic zones and much more. Dr. Malik stated that Pakistan's energy problem has been considerably reduced due to power projects that have been constructed under CPEC, and it is projected that by the end of 2018, Pakistan will have a net surplus electricity in the national grid. Dr. Malik concluded by saying that this mega project is an assurance of greater development, integration and connectivity between Pakistan and China, and beyond.

Responding to the Chairman's remarks on India, Mr. Zhou said that with the recent meeting held between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi, it is hoped that common grounds will be

achieved soon. He also emphasised that with the steady progress of CPEC projects, these issues will be resolved mutually.

Mr. Najam Rafique, Director Research, ISSI said that despite the close bilateral relations between China and Pakistan, it is observed that the representation of Pakistani scholars in the think tanks in China is minimal as compared to the presence of Indian scholars there. Also, he said that China must provide visa-on-arrival facility and tourist visas to Pakistanis, which is very important to enhance close people-to-people contacts between the two countries. Chinese authorities must look into this matter and rectify this shortcoming.