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## *Report – In-House Meeting*

# **Chinese delegation from Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)**

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## Pictures of the Event





The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted an In-House Meeting on May 23, 2018, with a 6-member Chinese delegation from Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The delegation was led by H.E. Mr. Kong Quan, Deputy Chairman, CPPCC. Other member of the delegation included: H.E. Mr. Shi Ke, member, CPPCC; H.E. Mdm. Yang Yanyi, Member CPPCC and former Ambassador to EU; H.E. Mr. Wang Zhongyi, Member CPPCC; Mdm. Cheng Jin, DG, Secretariat of CPPCC; and Mdm. Wang Yanjun, Deputy Division Director, Secretariat of CPPCC

Welcoming the delegation, Ambassador (Retd.) Khalid Mahmood, Chairman ISSI, emphasized that China and Pakistan have enjoyed multi-faceted cooperation with each other. He said that the bilateral relationship is marked by ever increasing friendship and mutual trust as there are no disputes between the two countries. He further underlined that with the launch of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, this relationship is deepening in the fields of economic cooperation, development and people-to-people contact through the vision presented by the Belt and Road Initiative. Being cognizant of the significance of CPEC and growing bilateral ties, ISSI has established a dedicated China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) for in-depth study of CPEC, China and Pakistan-China relations.

H.E. Mr. Kong Quan thanked the Chairman ISSI for hosting the meeting and his remarks. Mr. Quan noted that China-Pakistan friendship is very solid marked by wide-ranging cooperation. He underlined that in China's diplomacy Pakistan has always been a priority. Referring to his own diplomatic career, he highlighted that China-Pakistan 'All-weather strategic cooperative friendship' has solid foundations of mutual trust and mutual support. Giving a background of CPPCC, he remarked that CPPCC is a consultative body which engages Communist Party of China (CPC) and 8 other non-communist parties. In this sense, it is a unique body with Chinese characteristics. CPPCC consists of 2158 members from 56 ethnic groups. He underlined that a significant feature of CPPCC is democratic political consultation, and diplomatic engagement. He said that CPPCC had actively participated in the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October, 2017 and 13<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress in March 2018. These sessions lead to reform of relevant laws and now China is embarking on a new journey.

Amb. Khalid Mahmood then shared his thoughts on the CPEC venture. He said CPEC is going to transform the relationship between the two countries by promoting economic cooperation and expanding people-to-people contacts. Highlighting the internal and external challenges to and prospects of CPEC, he said that while there is a broad political consensus in Pakistan on implementing CPEC projects expeditiously, there were concerns regarding the employment of local labor at these projects. He further noted if there are differences between federating units, it is not because of CPEC, rather each province wants to have more and more significant share of the projects being implemented under CPEC. He underlined that CPEC is already making steady progress as it is the fastest growing corridor among other corridors under the Belt and Road Initiative. He said importance of CPEC lies in the fact that Pakistan provides confluence of land and sea routes of BRI. Gwadar port is significant for maritime routes. He assured the delegation that security of CPEC project sites and Chinese personnel lies with Pakistan. Federal government has made adequate arrangements for security of project sites and manpower, and it is an on-going responsibility.

Highlighting the external challenges facing CPEC, Amb. Khalid Mahmood underscored that India is openly opposed to CPEC. Its rhetoric and activities are destabilizing Baluchistan, which undermines CPEC. It is a short-sighted policy, but India has chosen to follow it. Meanwhile, Western governments are also opposed to the project. They claim to support the project, but at the same time raise the question “will it benefit Pakistan?” He informed the delegation that a question often raised is: “will Pak be caught in debt trap?” The Chairman said Pakistan knows that Chinese funding consists of concessionary loans, investments, and grants, but for public discourse, Chinese and Pakistani authorities need to come out with a joint counter-narrative to respond to opponents.

Following his discourse on challenges, the Chairman ISSI invited Dr. Ahmad Rashid Malik, Director, China-Pakistan Study Centre to present an overview of CPEC projects.

Dr. Malik specifically stated that CPEC touches every sector of Pakistani economy, including building of ports, infrastructure, and economic zones, and that Pakistan is expecting to provide more than 8 million jobs to the youth within the country. Gwadar is emerging as hub of

commercial activity. He underscored that CPEC will ensure economic growth in Pakistan and pave the way for better and prosperous Pakistan.

H.E. Quan then invited Mdm. Yang Yanyi to share her thoughts. She noted that against the backdrop of fast-changing regional and international situation role of think-tanks is becoming more critical in providing in well-researched, in-depth, and correct analyses, and information on current issues. On the assurance of peace and stability and continuation of policies she underlined that it is a challenge faced by developing countries. She welcomed the assurance of consensus on CPEC given by Chairman ISSI. She assured that China supports peace and stability in Pakistan. China respects Pakistan's sovereignty, integrity, peace and security. She noted that peace has been realised in Pakistan and hoped that peace and stability will be maintained. As for CPEC projects, she noted that bilateral cooperation should focus on achieving win-win cooperation. She underscored that both sides need to build confidence in Chinese standards and projects need to meet Chinese standards. She pointed that in some ways, China is ahead of Western world, thus, there should be no hesitancy in following Chinese standards. She stated that a matter of concern is the issue of efficiency. Sharing Chinese experience, she stated that new Chinese government is doing away with bureaucracy and is more focused towards service delivery. She noted China is ready to share best practices with Pakistan to improve efficiency.

H.E. Quan underscored that Chinese businesses have three responsibilities while being in Pakistan: a) promoting China-Pakistan friendship; b) promoting own business; and c) ensuring local employment and development. He noted that Chinese companies are cognizant of their Corporate Social Responsibility, and thus, are contributing to local economic development and employment generation. He stressed that while building projects of mutual gain first priority should be to use local resources of both countries and not bring in third parties.

H.E. Quan then invited Mr. Shi Ke, member CPPCC to share his thought.

Mr. Shi Ke is CEO of a Chinese company which is running number of water and energy projects in Pakistan. Mr. Shi Ke said that his company employs locals and provides them vocational training. His company is running a coal based energy project in Sindh and also mining coal. This project employs 1000 locals, and company plans to double this number. Mr. Shi Ke noted that

the project in Sindh complies with all international standards.

H.E. Quan then invited Mr. Wang Zhongyi, member CPPCC and editor of a Chinese magazine, to speak on social and media related issues.

Mr. Zhongyi noted that when two countries deal with such large projects like CPEC and engage in business transactions, then emergence of differences among people from different cultures is natural. He underlined that in his discussion with Pakistani friends during the visit, all agreed to avoid friction on cultures and between two peoples at all cost. He said that both countries should focus on expanding people-t-people exchanges, particularly in the field of education. People in both the countries need to be informed about history of relations between China and Pakistan. For future, both countries should strengthen people-to-people contacts and enhance think tank cooperation for long-term planning. He also pointed out that media is important for projection of CPEC. He noted that while there is extensive coverage of CPEC related activities in English newspapers, similar widespread coverage should also take place in local language newspapers and magazines.

Concluding the meeting, Chairman ISSI once again reiterated that CPEC is a visionary initiative launched by the leadership of the two countries. He noted that in the long term, CPEC will have much larger positive impact on regional peace and stability. He thanked the delegation for visiting ISSI.