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*Report – In-House Meeting*

*with*

## **“3-member Delegation from IDCPC”**

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China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted an In-House meeting with a 3-member delegation from International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC) to exchange views on issues of mutual interest. The delegation was headed by Mr. Hu Xiaodong, Deputy Director of Bureau I, IDCPC. Other members of the delegation included Mr. Chen Yongpei, Attaché at the Chinese Embassy; and Mr. Jin Enze Fourth-level Principal Staff Member of Bureau I, IDCPC. Dr. Talat Shabbir led the ISSI team at the meeting, comprising Mr. Najam Rafique, Director Research, Mr. Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director Arms Control & Disarmament Centre, Ms. Amina Khan, Senior Research Fellow and CPSC members.

Dr. Talat Shabbir welcomed the delegation to ISSI and introduced his team members. Mr. Hu Xiaodong thanked CPSC for hosting the delegation and introduced his team members.

Ms. Uroosa Khan, Associate Editor at CPSC, gave a short introduction of ISSI to the delegation, and briefed them on the activities and research work carried out at the Institute.

Mr. Xiaodong gave a background on IDCPC and shared that it is an organization under Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. IDCPC works to promote pragmatic cooperation with political parties, media and think tanks around the world. He noted that IDCPC has established contact with more than 500 parties and organizations across 160 countries. He underscored that IDCPC has a dedicated think tank called Contemporary World Studies and ISSI can explore avenues for collaboration with it.

Dr. Talat Shabbir, gave an overview of current state of Pakistan-China bilateral relationship. He noted that both countries enjoyed a multi-dimensional strong partnership. There exists a broad political consensus in Pakistan on the need to deepen strategic ties with China. In recent years, this relationship is moving from closer defense and security cooperation towards a broader economic and trade relations. An example of it is China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is being pursued as a joint venture by both sides. CPEC is focusing on infrastructure development and connectivity. As CPEC moves into its second phase, focus needs to be shifted to industrialization and job creation for youth of Pakistan. It is in this context, that CPSC at ISSI,

works to positively advance Pakistan-China bilateral relations through research, analysis and advocacy.

Mr. Najam Rafique shared his insights on evolving regional situation. He stated that India-Pakistan relations are tense following the recent Indian actions in Kashmir. Anti-Muslim agenda of the Modi government has led India to divide the state of Kashmir for changing the demographics of Kashmir. As tensions rise, threat of conventional conflict leading to a nuclear show-down remains a possibility between two countries. Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir is already hot. India has consistently refused to hold negotiations with Pakistan to resolve outstanding issues including Kashmir. Meanwhile, instability reigns in Afghanistan. US-Taliban peace talks reached a dead-end after a tweet from President Trump, but they are by no means buried. Indications are emerging that Washington wants revival of the peace talks, and Pakistan supports such efforts. Pakistan also backs regional endeavors for direct talks between Afghan government and the Taliban, including the recent efforts by China to hold an intra-Afghan dialogue this month. He said that Pakistan looks forward to the results of Afghan presidential elections and working with the new government. Mr. Rafique also touched on evolving situation in Middle East and Gulf region and South China Sea. He noted that these regions are hotspot for active conflict and possibilities of new wars exist.

Ms. Amina Khan shared her thoughts on the situation in Afghanistan. She said that while the result of Afghan presidential elections is awaited, different political factions are jockeying for power in the next administration. She noted that Beijing has announced to host Intra-Afghan dialogue as it is a crucial component of the peace process. Regarding US-Taliban draft agreement, she opined that more clarity is required on Taliban's commitment towards sustained ceasefire. In the absence of ceasefire, any agreement will be hard to implement.

Mr. Xiaodong, in his comments, underlined the strategic cooperation between China and Pakistan. He highlighted that for decades Pakistan and China have supported each other's core interests. Gradually, relationship has moved towards economic cooperation. Now, focus needs to be on reaping dividends of CPEC to promote industrialization in Pakistan. Similarly, people-to-people contacts should be enhanced. While Early Harvest Projects of CPEC have been completed, it entered into a slowdown phase during the past year. Now, momentum is being

revived again. At the recent Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) meeting, there was positive engagement from both sides and Chinese' objective is that all provinces of Pakistan should reap benefits from CPEC projects.

On the regional situation, Mr. Xiaodong underscored that India's moves in Kashmir have also undermined China's territorial sovereignty in Ladakh region. There is convergence of interests between Pakistan and China, and Beijing will continue to extend full support to Pakistan at all multilateral forums on the Kashmir issue. On Afghanistan situation, he stated that China supports constructive engagement between all Afghan political groups, and backs result-oriented talks between US and the Taliban. China refrains from interfering in domestic politics of any country, but supports all constructive peace processes.

This discussion was followed by an interactive Q&A session where Mr. Xiaodong and his colleagues asked questions about Pakistan's expectations from second phase of CPEC? And avenues for collaboration between ISSI and Chinese think tanks?

Dr. Talat Shabbir, in his comments noted that, in second phase of CPEC, employments opportunities will address questions being raised by many people about Chinese projects in Pakistan. When Chinese companies move their production units to Pakistan, it will lead to increase in foreign investments and job creation for Pakistani people. Moreover, Pakistan and China need to work together to build an effective narrative on CPEC.

Mr. Malik Qasim Mustafa, responding to question about collaboration between ISSI and Chinese think tanks underscored that ISSI has an active engagement with several Chinese think tanks including CASS, CACDA, CICIR and CIIS. There is regular exchange of delegations between ISSI and these think tanks. He shared that ISSI is in the process of sending a Pakistani scholar to CACDA for a three-month research fellowship.

Mr. Jin Enze asked a question about Kartarpur Corridor, if it was one-off event or more such actions will be taken? Mr. Najam Rafique noted that Kartarpur initiative is not a substitute for talks. Pakistan hopes that it becomes a stepping stone for sustained bilateral dialogue between the two countries.



## PICTURES OF THE EVENT



