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Report – Public Talk

“Italian Perceptions of Regional Connectivity Under BRI and CPEC”

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The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a Public Talk titled, “*Italian Perceptions of Regional Connectivity Under BRI and CPEC*” on January 28, 2020 under its Distinguished Lecture Series. Prof. Andrea Margelletti, Chairman of the Centre for International Studies (Ce.S.I.) in Rome, Italy, was the guest speaker at the occasion.

Welcoming the speaker and guests, Director General ISSI, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry said that the topic of the talk is very important for Pakistan as it is eager to cooperate with countries like Italy which are part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). He said that Italy and Pakistan share very warm ties and appreciated the efforts made by Prof. Margelletti in strengthening this relationship.

Sharing his views on BRI, Ambassador Chaudhry said that the suspicions raised in the West over the feasibility of Chinese investments are not backed by facts. He stated that commentators have also exaggerated the debt burden imposed by China on Pakistan. China and Pakistan enjoy a special relationship and CPEC has proved to be beneficial for Pakistan in a number of ways, he added. Ambassador Chaudhry also said that Pakistan has worked closely with the United States in various areas over the last seventy years and wishes to maintain good ties with Washington.

Prof. Andrea Margelletti began his talk by expressing his affection for people of Pakistan. He said that it is like a second home for him. On BRI, he was of the view that it is poised to change the face of Asia. He suggested that countries should avail the opportunities being provided by the Chinese government. He emphasized the importance of connectivity and asserted that it is critical for the survival of any country. Prof. Margelletti shared how Singapore, a country that is the size of a city, has reaped benefits from its connections with the rest of the world.

With China planning to develop infrastructure across the globe, he said that if these projects materialize, then they will benefit the local populations. While acknowledging that many countries are cooperating with China to spur their economic development, he pointed out the need to safeguard national interests.

Prof. Margelletti said that China is offering an alternate global strategy which the US is not ready to accept. He believed that Pakistan can offer valuable lessons in balancing the ties between the two global powers.

Responding to a question regarding the future of CPEC amidst all the opposition, Prof. Margelletti said that CPEC is not only about commerce. He maintained that there are geopolitical factors involved as well which Pakistan can use to its advantage. He added that CPEC has the potential of being a marvelous initiative if decisions are taken with responsibility.

Concluding the event, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG, ISSI, stated that BRI provides another opportunity to cement ties between Pakistan and Italy as it will open new avenues for cooperation between countries. He was of the view that if the international community adopts a constructive approach towards BRI then it will be in the interest of all the stakeholders.

PICTURES OF THE EVENT



