

MESSAGE BOARD

Opening Remarks of the Foreign Minister

ISSI Webinar to mark Yaum-e-Takbeer
(28 May 2020)

I would like to thank the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) for providing me this opportunity to share my sentiments at this webinar to mark Yaum-e-Takbeer. Every year, May 28 serves as a earnest reminder of Pakistan's desire for peace as well as the nation's unswerving resolve to defend its territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. It is also an occasion to reiterate our gratitude and appreciation to our scientists, engineers, armed forces and policy makers for their determination, dedication and hard work that enabled Pakistan to acquire nuclear capability for deterrence and self-defence.

Today we are commemorating Yaum-e-Takbeer against the backdrop of the global COVID-19 pandemic which threatens the international community without regard to geographic boundaries, ethnic, political and religious divides. It reminds us of the interdependence of the global community and the necessity for all nations to cooperate and collaborate in the face of the common challenges of the 21st century including disease, hunger, poverty, environmental degradation and climate change.

Yet, unfortunately, the current security situation in South Asia underscores the compulsion for Pakistan to remain ever vigilant of the more traditional threat to national security emanating from the hegemonisitic ambitions of a larger neighbor under the rule of an ultra-nationalist and revisionist regime.

The recent escalation along the Line of Control, incessant ceasefire violations and the canard of cross-border infiltration are designed to divert international attention from the gross human rights violations by the Indian Occupation forces in the Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

The BJP government's illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019 in an attempt to change the internationally-recognized disputed status of occupied Jammu and Kashmir and alter its demographic structure -- in flagrant violation of the Security Council resolutions, UN Charter and bilateral agreements -- have engendered further volatility in South Asia. The irresponsible statements made by senior

members of the BJP government, including on nuclear issues and threats of dismemberment, leave little doubt about the reckless mind-set at work.

The flawed notion of establishment of a ‘new normal’ and fantasies of ‘punishing Pakistan’ while remaining below the threshold of a nuclear conflict demonstrate irresponsible and dangerous behaviour by India. The world witnessed a demonstration of this belligerent military posture in February 2019, when in the wake of the Pulwama incident in occupied Kashmir, there was an attempt to resort to aggression against Pakistan on a completely false pretence. While responding effectively in self-defence and deflating exaggerated notions of military superiority, Pakistan exhibited restraint and responsibility. However, it is not always possible to predict the trajectory of escalation in similar situations and Pakistan should not be expected to one-sidedly carry the burden for maintaining peace.

Pakistan is a peace-loving country. Our conduct as a nuclear weapon state will continue to be defined by restraint and responsibility. As we seek to ensure our national security, credible minimum deterrence remains our guiding principle. We are opposed to a nuclear or conventional arms race in the region. Pakistan has demonstrated its commitment to peace and stability by putting forward the proposal for a Strategic Restraint Regime (SRR). Yet our desire for peace should not leave anyone in doubt regarding our capability and will to defend ourselves effectively against any form of aggression.

Let me conclude by recognizing the remarkable contributions of our scientific organizations to the socio-economic development of Pakistan and the welfare of its people. The genesis of Pakistan’s nuclear program was exclusively peaceful. Since the establishment of Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) in 1956, we have been working to harness nuclear technology for socio-economic development and have made great strides.

The IAEA is playing an active role in helping countries meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Pakistan is working together with the IAEA and other countries in realizing the true potential of peaceful uses of nuclear technology in a safe, secure and safeguarded manner.

With over one million cancer patients annually, the PAEC cancer hospitals are contributing to the SDG 3 on “Good Health & Well-being”. For SDG 2 on “Zero Hunger”, the agriculture & biotech institutes have developed 111 different crop varieties and million of acres have been treated through Integrated Pest

Management (IPM). For provision of “Affordable and Clean Energy” as envisioned in SDG 7, nuclear power is being expanded in the total energy mix. The PAEC is also contributing to the goals of “Quality Education” (SDG 4) and “Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9) through promoting research, and development in its training institutes. These efforts have resulted in increased collaboration with CERN including through manufacturing equipment for the world’s largest particle accelerator.

In the face of COVID-19 pandemic, our scientific organizations were quick to come up with local designs for essential equipment, such as ventilators, and other indigenous solutions thus enabling us to be better prepared to face the challenge. This is a manifestation of the fact that, as a country with extensive experience and expertise in science and technology, Pakistan can be a significant contributor to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the international level. There can be tremendous spin-offs of our scientific programmes in terms of expanding our high technology exports.

We will strengthen partnerships at the international level, including the UN and IAEA, as providers of services and expertise in science and technology, including civilian nuclear applications.