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Report – Webinar

“International Day of UN Peacekeepers”

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China Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a webinar on May 29, 2020 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of UN peacekeeping. Lt Gen Hilal Hussain (Retd), Former Advisor to Permanent Representative to UN was the chief guest at the occasion. Mr. Farrukh Iqbal Khan, DG UN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad; Dr. Tughral Yamin, Associate Dean, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, NUST and Maj Gen Samrez Salik (Retd) former DG ISSRA were invited to deliver their remarks while Dr. Syed Kaleem Imam, Inspector General of National Highways & Motorway Police was the keynote speaker. Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General ISSI, also shared his views on UN peacekeeping and Pakistan's commitment towards peace building.

Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director CPSC, in his introductory remarks said that the dedication and courage demonstrated by UN peacekeepers over the decades has played a critical role in strengthening peace across the world. Many professional soldiers, men and women serving under the UN lost their lives for the cause of peace and today is the day that we honor their memories. Pakistan has a long history with UN peacekeeping, having been one of the largest contributors of troops and police for decades. The country has lost more than 150 peacekeepers throughout its history in UN peacekeeping. Dr. Shabbir said that besides commemorating the UN peacekeeping day, the aim of this event is to understand the significance of peacekeeping contributions and how can Pakistan consolidate on what it achieved by making supreme sacrifices and contributions during peacekeeping missions across the world.

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry in his welcome remarks stated that on the occasion of UN day for peacekeeping, we pay tribute to the courage and professionalism of all UN peacekeepers. Pakistan, as a major troop contributing country, is proud of its contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, which is a cardinal principle of Pakistan's foreign policy. Ambassador Chaudhry further noted that in sync with the enhanced role of UN peacekeepers in peace building, Pakistan has also provided police peacekeepers who have earned us respect all around the world, especially in Africa where most of UN peacekeeping missions are located. Ambassador Chaudhry also recognized the importance of UNMOGIP, which could play an important role in monitoring peace and tranquility on the line of control. Pakistan's armed and security forces are proud of our contribution to the world peace, Ambassador Chaudhry concluded.

Mr. Farukh Khan paid tribute to the peacekeepers and discussed the approach towards the future of peacekeeping. He said that peacekeeping architecture has evolved over time. It started with truce monitoring and delved into arenas such as political security and human rights. He added that peacekeeping has shaped according to security situation. However, there is greater need for delivery according to the availability of resources. With new concepts emerging, there is a greater need for examining the future of peacekeeping and preparing our troops accordingly. He further stated that the role of women peacekeepers has become even more important and today, apart from Covid-19, there is a need to address the issues of climate change as well. He stated that we have a very strong political support within Pakistan as well as from the Armed Forces to continue to play an important role in maintain international peace and security.

While commenting on the role of Pakistan in peace keeping mission, Maj Gen Samrez Salik said that Pakistan is one of the oldest and as well as highest contributors of the troops of UN peacekeeping missions. He added that Pakistani forces have displayed tremendous amount of professionalism during these missions. From 1998-2001 Maj Gen Samrez said that he was responsible for selecting peacekeepers from Pakistan and pointed out that despite numerous security challenges faced by our country we have been doing our best to meet our peacekeeping obligations. Prior to that, he served on a UN mission in Western Sahara where he had observed the appreciation for Pakistani troops from their counterparts and UN officials.

In his remarks, Dr. Tughral Yamin highlighted how participation in peacekeeping duties has had a positive impact on the regional level for Pakistan. Pakistan and India have amicably operated together on UN peacekeeping missions. Pakistan's prominence in such operations has earned both the country and its forces immense goodwill. He further stated that numerous men and women peacekeepers laid down their lives to serve humanity at large and the institute has played a significant role in remembering and learning from the struggles of peacekeepers. He also touched upon the growing realization regarding the role of women in peacekeeping operations. Dr. Yamin said that female peacekeepers from Pakistan have done exceptionally well in their respective fields.

Dr. Syed Kaleem Imam while delivering his keynote remarks commented on the significance of this day. Dr. Imam said that peacekeeping is a unique force where people from army, police hailing from different countries across the globe serve together for a common cause. While

applauding the efforts of UN, Dr. Imam said that UN has played a significant role in saving and serving the humanity and the participating countries are playing their due role in this mission. He added that serving in UN missions reminded him of the Quranic verse which tells us that, “if anyone saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of the whole humanity.”

Dr. Imam also expressed his thoughts on peacekeeping and role of Pakistan police. He said that he was grateful to the government of Pakistan, Pakistan’s Foreign Office and Permanent Mission to UN, New York for giving Pakistani police officers an opportunity to serve in most powerful transnational organization in the world. Three core values of UN principles of integrity, professionalism, and respect for diversity subsequently became the hallmark of Pakistani police officers. He added that Pakistani police officers have also been playing their part in building capacity of local police in conflict zones during their mission. UN peacekeepers and their families make great sacrifices and the global community should be grateful for their services.

On COVID-19, Dr. Imam said that world is going through a difficult phase and in this current situation, it is commendable that Pakistani peacekeepers are helping conflict ridden countries. He underlined that we are following the vision of Quaid-e-Azam that our foreign policy is one of friendliness and goodwill towards the world. Pakistan will never be found lacking in extending its moral and material support to the oppressed and suppressed people of the world while upholding the principles of UN charter.

Lt Gen Hilal Hussain (Retd) stated that peacekeeping has evolved from a military to multi-faceted robust model. Today, the role of peacekeeping has broadened through multi-dimensional peace operations; political security, human rights and gender parity. Pakistan’s troops have shown exemplary professionalism in peace building missions. He recalled that at one time a European diplomat questioned his soldier’s readiness before going into battlefield during a mission, but before he could reply an Indian officer gave assurance that Pakistani soldiers are well-capable of handling onerous situations.

He stated that sacrifices of brave UN peacekeepers must be honored and Pakistan should strive to enhance its contribution in global peacekeeping initiatives. He paid tributes to the peacekeepers and congratulated ISSI for celebrating the International Day of UN Peacekeepers.

He said that he has learned a great deal about contemporary peacekeeping by being part of this event and thanked all the organizers and participants.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG ISSI, in his concluding remarks, commended the role of UN in building peace and security, however, he emphasized that more clarity is required in UN peace keeping mandate. A pressing problem in peace operations is that some oldest conflicts like that of Kashmir and Palestine are frozen rather than being resolved. He further said that Pakistan is proud of its role in the UN peacekeeping and will continue to be a part of this cause. He thanked all the speakers and participants for celebrating this special day.