

Statement by Shehbaz Sharif
Prime Minister of Pakistan
at the Sixth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and
Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA)

13 October 2022 Astana
Republic of Kazakhstan

Your Excellency Kassym-Jomart Tokayev,
President of the Republic of Kazakhstan,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Heads of Delegations,

It is an honour and privilege for me to address this 6th Summit Meeting of the *Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia* (CICA). I am grateful for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to me and my delegation, in this beautiful city.

Pakistan attaches great importance to the CICA platform. The Conference has been playing an important role in enhancing cooperation, and promoting trust and understanding on the Asian continent.

We value Kazakhstan's leadership in injecting further dynamism and impetus into CICA. We also appreciate the vision offered by Kazakhstan, in transforming CICA into an international organization, through an incremental and consensus-based approach.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan is living through a colossal climate-induced calamity. Unprecedented rains and flooding that have submerged more than one-third of my country are, without any doubt, the consequence of global warming and climate change. The initial estimates of total cost to our economy is to the tune of over 30 billion dollars.

I have spent the last many weeks going from one scene of devastation to another; I have embraced people who have lost everything – perhaps even their dreams – and I have marshalled all the resources at my

disposal for rescue, relief and rehabilitation. But I am grappling with the sinking feeling, that we just do not have enough at hand. The force of nature – of climate change – has truly overwhelmed us.

What makes the situation even more tragic is that even though Pakistan is responsible for less than 1% of global carbon emissions, yet we are among the top ten countries most severely impacted by climate change.

This disaster may set Pakistan back by years. More than 1600 Pakistanis – including children – have lost their lives. Thousands of kilometres of road infrastructure and bridges are washed away. Entire villages have been swallowed up by raging waters. Cotton, wheat and rice crops lie in ruins. Vast stretches of land today resemble an ocean. Navy boats run where once children played football and cricket.

Mr Chairman,

Pakistan needs immediate help. Our 33 million climate refugees – that's more than the population of many countries – these climate refugees need to be rehabilitated. I am personally grateful to the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres for having visited Pakistan earlier this month. We are thankful to the UN for the fresh appeal of 816 million dollars for Pakistan earlier this month. This five-fold increase in the amount is aimed at tackling the challenges of water-borne diseases among the affected population.

Many countries have also pledged financial assistance, and sent relief goods. On behalf of my nation, let me thank each and every one of them, for their acts of generosity and empathy.

We look forward to your continued support as we transition to the more daunting phase of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Let me assure you we are determined to emerge stronger from this catastrophe, rebuilding through a comprehensive, resilient and sustainable model.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan's location offers a natural bridge and conduit among regional economies. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, has transformed the economic and connectivity landscape of the region. We invite our friends to take advantage of the opportunities for trade, business and investment in Pakistan.

Four decades of conflict and instability in Afghanistan have taken a heavy toll on millions of Afghan people and imperilled regional peace and security.

Of all the countries in the world, Pakistan has borne the most serious consequences of the conflict in Afghanistan. We have suffered over 80,000 casualties and economic losses of over 150 billion dollars in the fight against terrorism. To this day, we continue to host about 4 million Afghan refugees on our soil.

A peaceful, stable, united and prosperous Afghanistan is in the best interest of Pakistan, the entire region and the international community.

We call upon the world to support the people of Afghanistan in their quest for sustainable peace, stability and development.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan's first priority is to revive rapid and equitable economic growth. To do so, stability in the region is most essential.

Pakistan desires peaceful relations with all its neighbours, including India. However until India halts its atrocities in Occupied Kashmir a just and lasting peace will remain elusive.

For seven decades India has defied the will of United Nations, as reflected through the two UN resolutions on Kashmir; for seven decades India has trampled the will of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, by denying them the right of self-determination; and for seven decades, India has used repression, to silence the voice of Kashmiris demanding their inalienable rights.

I would therefore urge all of you to look behind the gloss of Indian democracy and recognise the brutal nature of its policies in Occupied Kashmir. In this terrorised valley of Kashmir, India brandishes democracy not through the ballot, but through its bullet. Here Indian democracy is known less for its rights and freedoms, and more for its repression and brutality.

The truth is that India today is a threat to its minorities, to its neighbours, to its region – and to itself.

And yet, we are willing to engage with it for the sake of peace.

India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019, and all subsequent steps to undermine the internationally recognized disputed status of

Jammu and Kashmir, have vitiated the environment and eroded the space for dialogue.

The onus remains on India to take the necessary steps to create an enabling environment for meaningful and result-oriented engagement.

We also need to urgently find political solutions to the conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere in Asia. A just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question is essential for comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Chairman,

We reaffirm our commitment to the CICA process and the concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in Asia.

Through meaningful interaction and constructive dialogue, we can build and bolster mutual confidence and trust. With political will and sincerity of purpose, we can reinforce convergences around shared objectives and fully utilize cooperative multilateralism to achieve win-win outcomes.

I thank you all.
