

**SPEECH OF PRESIDENT TO THE JOINT SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENT**  
**JUNE 10, 2013**

**BISMILLAH IR RAHMAN-AR RAHIM**

**Mr. Speaker!**

**Honorable Members of the Parliament**

**ASSALAM-O-ALAIKUM**

I am thankful to Allah, to be standing here [today](#) in all humility, to address the Parliament at the beginning of its First Year.

It is an honor to be the first elected civilian in the history of Pakistan to oversee the transfer of power in a democratic manner.

It is a cause for which Shaheed Benazir Bhutto dedicated her life.

It is a cause for which I spent 11 and a half years in prison.

It is a cause for which Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif suffered imprisonment and exile. Democracy has arrived.

I wish to thank you for the great honour shown to me.

**Mr. Speaker!**

I should begin by congratulating once again the new elected Prime Minister Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.

He has been entrusted with a great responsibility by the voters and the elected Parliament.

I wish him good luck in the discharge of his responsibilities.

I am confident he will rise to the expectations of the people.

I wish to congratulate you Mr. Speaker on your election as the custodian of this august House.

Your election as the Speaker is a demonstration of trust reposed in you by the elected members of the National Assembly.

I wish to congratulate all the newly elected members of the National Assembly.

I wish to particularly welcome the women and NON-Muslim Members of Parliament.

Their empowerment is part of our state policy that cuts across political divide.

I appreciate the members of the last Parliament for passing historic Constitutional amendments as well as laws.

I also wish to compliment the former Prime Ministers for their able leadership.

And I wish to recognize the Chairman Senate, Senator Nayyer Hussain Bokhari and former Speaker Madam Dr Fehmida Mirza for their high standards and impartial conduct.

I should also like to congratulate the people of Pakistan for their participation in the elections.

They demonstrated courage in defying threats by the enemies of democracy.

Their participation shows that the ethos of our people is democratic.

There is no place for Dictators in **Today's** Pakistan.

I wish to salute the people for their courage.

They have spoken through their vote.

Their voice has been heard.

It has been demonstrated by the smooth transfer of power.

And I commend all political parties and their leaders for accepting the poll results despite reservations.

Together they have added to the grace and glory of democracy.

**Mr. Speaker!**

This is no ordinary day.

It is a great day in our history.

Together we have fulfilled our promise to democracy.

Together we have fulfilled our promise of smooth transition of power from one democracy to another democracy.

This democratic, peaceful transition marks the success of a prolonged struggle.

A dream has come true

A promise has been redeemed.

It is a triumph of all political parties and democratic forces.

It is a triumph of the people of Pakistan.

Let there be no doubt or mistake about it.

Collectively our people have written a new chapter in our History.

Collectively the people of Pakistan deserve to be commended.

**Mr. Speaker!**

I recall standing here five years ago to deliver my first address to the Parliament.

Then I had urged the Parliament to empower itself. I had called upon it to revisit the 17th Amendment. I had urged it to take away the powers of the President under Article 58 (2)(B) of the Constitution.

A year later I repeated the request.

We urged the Speaker, the first woman Speaker in the Muslim World, to form an All Parties Committee for this purpose,

It is a matter of great satisfaction and pride that Parliament purged the Constitution of undemocratic Articles.

It is a great honor for the members of the august House.

It will always remain the first line in their biography.

They have reasons to be proud.

They brought about the first major Constitutional reform in more than three decades.

Previously there were piecemeal constitutional amendments,

But these were designed to promote the personal interests of dictators.

They were not meant to strengthen democracy or empower the people.

The outgoing Parliament made a lasting contribution.

It made the Constitution truly democratic.

Provincial rights as well as Parliamentary sovereignty have been restored.

It abolished the Concurrent Legislative List and transferred all subjects to the Provinces.

It banished Article 58(2) (b) that hung over the Parliament like a sword.

The Council of Common Interests has been strengthened,

Oil, gas and natural resources within a province now belong jointly to the Province and the Federal Government.

The Parliament also has an oversight role, in the selection of the Chief Election Commissioner.

Let no one think of subverting the Constitution.

The suspension and abrogation of the Constitution is an act of High Treason.

No Court shall validate it.

These are no small achievements.

And all of it was achieved with consensus.

I wish to compliment every single member of the outgoing parliament.

I also wish to commend the previous government, the coalition partners and indeed all political parties who made it possible.

Together they worked for democracy to take roots.

**Mr. Speaker!**

Freedom, Democracy and Constitutionalism lead the nations to greater progress and glory.

The first Constitution was given in 1973 by political leaders of the time, led by Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

The fundamental rights were introduced for the first time.

The people felt protected.

As a result our people made great progress.

They were filled with energy and guided by a sense of purpose.

That progress was halted when the Constitution was subverted on [July 5, 1977](#).

The hopes and dreams of the people were shattered,

A process of national decay set in.

There was yet another assault on the Constitution in 1999.

For decades we have been reeling under the forces of decay.

It is a sad reflection that the Constitution has been abrogated

Unfortunately its abrogation was endorsed by the pillars of the state.

That must come to an end.

There have been calls to punish those who subverted the Constitution.

It is for this august Parliament and the government to devise an appropriate and wise policy.

I assure you of my support in this.

Mr. Speaker

We can achieve a lot if we keep aside our prejudices and egos.

Let us renew our commitment to the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

Let us vow to uphold the supremacy of the Constitution.

Each pillar of the state must operate within its constitutional limits.

Let no organ of the state trespass into the domain of others.

We need reconciliation and not confrontation to go forward. Let not democratic forces challenge one another. Democratic forces must come together and join ranks.

We are confronted with serious challenges.

Economic hardships have caused pain.

Power shortages, rising militancy and extremism have compounded economic woes.

We have to find solutions to our problems.

The Basha Dam has already been launched. It will generate 4500 MW of power and store over 6 million acre feet of water.

Work on it and other energy projects like the Thar Coal need to be stepped up.

We are faced with a huge task.

I am confident the new government will overcome the challenges.

Peace and reconciliation in Balochistan must receive high priority.

We need to address the issue of missing persons.

A Commission on Missing Persons has already been set up.

It has also made some progress.

But a lot more needs to be done.

It can be done.

The cycle of poverty must be broken.

A program of poverty alleviation and women empowerment has already been launched. The poor women expect the program to continue and strengthened further.

Women and minorities are the most vulnerable groups.

Efforts to protect and empower them need to be kept up.

We need to further strengthen interfaith harmony.

We need to take measure to prevent the misuse of the blasphemy law for settling personal and political scores.

The disabled and special people need to be integrated in the mainstream of national life.

We need to have a mechanism for transparent accountability of all.

It must be across the board and NOT selective.

Let everyone be judged by the same yardstick.

Militancy, extremism and terrorism pose the greatest threat to our national security.

The nation is united against militancy.

We need strong leadership to overcome the threat.

We are ready to make peace with those willing to give up violence.

But we should also be ready to use force against those who challenge the writ of the state.

We will undertake economic development of the affected areas.

The government will not allow the use of our soil, for terrorist activities against any other country.

We will also not allow anyone to violate our sovereignty.

The sovereignty of Pakistan must be protected at all cost.

It will be.

Our Armed forces, Para military forces, Police and the citizens have made great sacrifices in fighting militancy.

The nation is proud of their sacrifices.

Their sacrifices will not go in vain.

Mr. Speaker,

Expatriate Pakistanis are a national treasure.

They need to be recognized and honored.

We need to work towards giving them the right to vote.

Devolution set into motion need to be taken forward.

It needs to be taken further to the level of local bodies.

The government is committed to upholding the freedom of the media.

There is also need to create an atmosphere of self regulation without state interference.

Pakistan seeks a conducive and stable regional environment.

Our relationship with China remains the cornerstone of our foreign policy.

Relations with China are not affected by internal political changes.

We believe in investing in relationships.

My nine visits to China are a manifestation of this investment.

My trips to Central Asia and seven visits to Turkey demonstrate our eagerness to strengthen ties with these countries.

We look forward to peace and stability in Afghanistan.

We wish success to the Afghan-led reconciliation and reconstruction process.

We are seeking to improve relations with all countries in the region.

The Prime Minister has already given the guideline.

The goal of prosperity and development will not succeed without regional peace.

We want to improve relations with India.

Steps have been taken to liberalize trade with India.

We want a peaceful settlement of the water issue.

We seek a peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir issue, in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

We do not want an arms race in the region.

We believe in dialogue to resolve issues.

Dialogue alone can ensure peace and understanding.

We are determined to root out militancy.

It is not an issue of any single country.

Militancy threatens all countries in the region and indeed the whole world.

It calls for sincere and collective efforts of all.

We can fight militancy better, through dialogue and cooperation rather than doubting each other.

We greatly value our relations with the Muslim world.

We will continue to strive for further improving our ties with them.

We also value partnerships with the United States and Europe.

We need to further strengthen it on the basis of mutual trust, mutual benefit and respect for sovereignty.

Drone attacks are a serious violation of sovereignty and international law.

They are also counterproductive and are not acceptable.

**Mr. Speaker!**

We need to take some hard decisions and without delay.

Delaying decisions do not avoid problems.

They only invite crises.

We need to carry forward the fruits of democracy to the grass roots.

We cannot afford confrontation.

We need reconciliation.

We need to learn the truth about past mistakes in order not to repeat them.

This calls for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I am confident that as democracy takes roots we will be able to deliver on it.

I have no doubt that we will rise to the dream that our founding fathers had about Pakistan.

I wish the new government and the Parliament good luck.

Thank You.

Pakistan Paindabad