

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SECRETARIAT
(DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF MEDIA)

PRESS RELEASE

**TRADE AND ECONOMIC LINKS TO OPEN UP A NEW ERA OF COOPERATION
BETWEEN PAKISTAN & AFGHANISTAN: PM IMRAN KHAN**

**ELIMINATING TRADE BARRIERS, VISA LIBERLIZATION TO HELP PROMOTE
ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES : SPEAKER NA ASAD QAISAR**

Islamabad; October 26, 2020: While inaugurating the two-day seminar on Pakistan Afghanistan Trade and Investment Forum 2020, Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan has said that Pakistan and Afghanistan have been enjoying cordial relations since centuries and both countries share religious and cultural traditions. He said that peace in Afghanistan is inevitable for regional peace and prosperity as Afghanistan has been facing the scourge of war since four decades. He remarked that this war and conflict bore heavy losses in terms of both human resources and poverty. He also mentioned that the incumbent Indian government is the worst example of fascism although it claimed itself as the biggest democracy yet it is bent upon inflicting atrocities and suppression on innocent Kashmiri people. He remarked that minorities especially innocent people of Kashmir have been under continuous suppression and atrocities and it is the worst example of suppression and barbarity. He mentioned that the incumbent government has always raised Kashmir issue on every regional and international forum and would continue the same until the resolution of the Kashmir issue as per the United Nations Security Council resolutions. He remarked that now international organizations and UNO have started to raise their concerns over Kashmir issue.

Prime Minister Imran Khan said that the future of both countries is dependent upon their unity , mutual trade and enhanced economic interlinks. He stressed to facilitate Afghan trade and investors as both countries have vast potential of investment and economic activities which would bring regional prosperity and development. He remarked that both countries can be hub of trade and business due to CPEC . He remarked that the Afghan owned and Afghan led peace process has been the chief concern of the incumbent government and no other country in the world can take credit equal to Pakistan in its efforts to maintain peace in Afghanistan. He lauded the efforts of Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser for bringing both countries together on the mutual interest of trade , investment and business as people to people contact are vital for regional progress and development. He appreciated the efforts of Speaker Asad Qaiser for organizing this successful seminar.

In his address, Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaisar said that promotion of trade and economic links between Pakistan and Afghanistan would usher into new era of socio-economic development and would help bring people of the two sides more closer. He expressed these views while addressing the opening session of two-day seminar “ Pakistan- Afghanistan trade and investment forum 2020” in Islamabad on Monday. Speaker National Assembly said that 2,640 Kilometers Pak-Afghan border is not only the longest border that Pakistan shares with any of its neighboring country, it is also the thread which weaves our two nations into a historic tapestry of social, cultural, linguistic, economic, religious and fraternal ties.

He said that Pakistan values the common bond that binds Pakistan and Afghanistan together and it is important for the leadership of two sides to create harmony, develop understanding and build

consensus amongst ourselves to seek solutions of our common problems. He called for building a united front against the scourges of our time especially poverty and instability. He observed that Pakistan and Afghanistan are strategically significant trading partners however, trade between the two countries gradually declined and eliminating trade barriers along with facilitating traders would not only enhance the trade volume between Pakistan and Afghanistan but would also greatly contribute to poverty eradication and social uplift. “Such initiatives will also increase employment opportunities for our people and decreasing Non-tariff barriers on both sides of the border will enhance mutual trade” Asad Qaisar said.

He pointed out that establishment of Pakistan-Afghanistan Parliamentary Friendship Group and its Task forces for encouraging people-to-people contact and facilitate bilateral and transit trade is a manifestation of our commitment to improving bilateral economic engagement with Afghanistan.

He proposed formation of a taskforce to oversee the terms of negotiation of Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) that is going to expire in year 2021 needs input from parliamentarians and institutional stakeholders from both sides of borders for a comprehensive future trade agreement. Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaisar reiterated Pakistan’s commitment in terms of promoting Parliamentary diplomacy and said that Pakistan is ready to play its role in mounting strong linkages for mutually beneficial trade relations with Afghanistan.

Addressing the participants, Speaker National Assembly remarked that a peaceful economic cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan and improved trade and transit facilities would help to connect Arabian Sea shipping lanes with Central Asia. He further remarked that Pakistan’s support for Afghan peace process and Intra-Afghan negotiations has been acknowledged by the Afghan Government as well as the international community and we reiterate our continued support for the peace process.

“The level of participation in this forum from both sides fills us with hope for the future of our relations” Asad Qasair said while expressing gratitude to the leader of Afghan delegation and other participants for attending seminar. He expressed the hope that seminar would go a long way boosting trade cooperation between Islamabad and Kabul and both sides would be able to build a long-lasting mutually beneficial relationships.

Speaker Wolsi Jirga(Afghan Parliament) Mir Rehman Rehmani applauded the efforts of Pakistani Government to support Afghanistan for bringing peace in Afghanistan. He said that Afghanistan highly values its ties with Pakistan as both countries enjoys shared religious and cultural values and Afghanistan is proud of its close relations with Pakistan. He remarked that there is a need to capitalize on potential of both countries as both countries have vast opportunities of trade and investment. He remarked that by mutual cooperation both countries can progress and develop together. He appreciated the steps taken by Pakistan government to facilitate the Afghan transit trade as now it took just three days in clearance of container on border and opening new border points for trade would facilitate the traders. He appreciated the Speaker Asad Qaiser for his efforts to organize this seminar and bringing the both nations closer.

The seminar was largely attended by parliamentarians, experts, trade chambers and people from different walks of life.