Joint Press Release: EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue

The first EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue was held in Islamabad on 05 June 2012. The Pakistan side was led by Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar and the European Union delegation was led by High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton.

The two sides expressed their deep satisfaction at the launching of the Strategic Dialogue, reflecting the comprehensive and forward looking nature of EU-Pakistan relations. This dialogue is the result of decisions taken at the 2009 and 2010 Pakistan-EU Summits. Both sides also welcomed the new Five-Year Engagement Plan that demonstrates the strength and diversity of this long term and broad based partnership.

The two sides engaged in constructive and detailed discussions on enhancing bilateral cooperation and shared views on regional and international issues of mutual concern.

Foreign Minister Khar expressed appreciation for the package of Autonomous Trade Preferences (ATPs) for Pakistan offered by the EU in the aftermath of the devastating 2010 floods. High Representative Ashton conveyed that the process was nearing completion in Brussels, and that the package would be implemented as soon as possible. They also discussed the GSP+ scheme and Foreign Minister Khar hoped that Pakistan could be considered for this favourable trading scheme in 2014.

The Dialogue provided an opportunity to review EU development cooperation including the broad parameters of the second EU Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for 2007-2013, which included projects for rural development and natural resource management, education and human resource management, governance and human rights, and trade development. The European Union also reiterated its commitment for area-based community development, particularly in the Malakand Division.

High Representative Ashton welcomed the steps Pakistan had taken in implementing its international human rights commitments in national laws in many important areas, including the rights of women, and the establishment of an independent Human Rights Commission. Both sides agreed to work closely in this regard.
Foreign Minister Khar reiterated that the Government of Pakistan was committed to holding free and fair elections in accordance with the Constitution. Furthermore, in keeping with Pakistan’s tradition of welcoming election observers, High Representative Ashton confirmed that the European Union was willing to send an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Pakistan for the forthcoming elections.

Pakistan and the EU reaffirmed their shared commitment to work together to combat terrorism. High Representative Ashton expressed appreciation for the enormous sacrifices made by the people of Pakistan in fighting terrorism and extremism. In order to enhance the existing close cooperation on counter-terrorism, the two sides agreed to the establishment of a Pakistan-EU Steering Committee on Counterterrorism.

Foreign Minister Khar and High Representative Ashton held in-depth discussions on regional and international issues. They underlined the importance of peace, stability and security in Afghanistan and reaffirmed their support for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process. They also underscored the need for the sustained commitment of the international community during the transformation phase in Afghanistan, and agreed to continue working closely in this regard.

Foreign Minister Khar also briefed High Representative Ashton on the ongoing Pakistan-India peace process and the efforts made by Pakistan to normalize relations with India. Pakistan had reached out to its neighbours to create peace and prosperity in the region. The EU High Representative also expressed support for the ongoing and result-oriented dialogue between Pakistan and India, including the significant progress on liberalizing trade.

The two sides agreed that the second round of the Pakistan-EU Strategic Dialogue would be held in Brussels at mutually convenient dates next year.

The press conference will be available on Europe by Satellite