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## **PAKISTAN-UKRAINE RELATIONS: PECULIARITIES OF DEVELOPMENT**

Pakistan was among the first countries to recognize independence of Ukraine. The process of establishing formal diplomatic relations was initiated in 1992. In 1996, both sides signed the final agreement for reciprocal opening of the embassies in the respective capitals and resultantly Embassy of Pakistan in Kyiv and Embassy of Ukraine in Islamabad were established in 1997.

Pakistan and Ukraine enjoy friendly and cooperative relations. However, I believe there is a huge potential that needs to be tapped to further strengthen our bilateral cooperation in both political as well as economic areas. In this context, our two countries have signed a number of agreements. Agreements on Trade and Economic Cooperation, Avoidance of Double Taxation, and Establishment of Joint Inter-Governmental Commission have been signed recently. Many more agreements are being negotiated to provide the basic framework required for deepening our relationship as we continue efforts to expand a mutually beneficial cooperation in diverse fields.

I see huge prospects for enhancing our bilateral economic cooperation and, as Ambassador of Pakistan in Ukraine, I have been working to bring people of our two countries closer on all fronts including particularly trade and business. As part of efforts to promote bilateral trade and commercial relationship, Pakistan-Ukraine Business Council (PUBC) under Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has been established. The PUBC has been a useful platform facilitating interaction among business community in both countries. Now Embassy is working with the PUBC to hold a joint meeting of both Pakistani and Ukrainian chapters of the Council in the near future. Meanwhile, business delegations have been exchanged and Ukrainian business delegations have started participating in Expo Pakistan which is the biggest trade exhibition in Pakistan held in Karachi every year.

Pakistan's major export items to Ukraine include textile goods, rice and fresh fruits mainly mandarin. The imports from Ukraine range from oil seeds like sun flower, iron and steel including scrap, wheat and its by-products and fertilizer. The trade in recent years has been on the increase. During 2014, the volume of bilateral trade between Pakistan and Ukraine increased by over 50 percent as compared to 2013. Currently the annual

trade turnover stands at around US\$ 500 million but there is huge potential that remains untapped. I would like to emphasize that Pakistan produces a range of high quality products that can be marketed in Ukraine. Similarly Ukrainian products have the potential to find a market in Pakistan.

On the investment side, Pakistan would like Ukrainian companies to come and benefit from the opportunities and potential which Pakistan's growing economy offers particularly in power sector, oil & gas, infrastructure, housing, healthcare, education, information technologies and renewable energy and environmental technologies. Pakistan Board of Investment has been mandated to facilitate and assist foreign investors. Board of Investment will hold investors' hand to fast track projects under one window.

We continue efforts to broaden bilateral academic exchange and collaboration in the field of research, science and technology. In this context, Embassy is pursuing early finalization of Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Education and Agreement on Equivalence of Degrees to facilitate student and academic exchange between the two countries.

Pakistan and Ukraine are also in the process of negotiating a cultural cooperation agreement that would provide a framework for enhanced cultural activities between the two countries. Meanwhile, Embassy continues to work to introduce Ukrainian people to Pakistan's cultural heritage by participating in various cultural events e.g. Asia Food & Cultural Festival, Annual IWCK bazar etc. Ukrainian people have appreciated these cultural events very much. We hope to have more cultural activities in each other's country once the agreement on cultural cooperation is signed by both sides.

For cooperation at the grass root level, both sides are also working on proposals for twinning of Pakistani and Ukrainian cities (Karachi with Odessa, Gwadar with Kherson, and Kyiv with Islamabad).

We have around 2000 Pakistanis living in Ukraine. They are contributing to the wellbeing of Ukrainian society. While living in Ukraine, naturally these Pakistanis have a desire that the country comes out of present difficult situation as soon as possible.

Many Pakistani students come to Ukraine to study. Although in recent years the number has declined due to strict visa regime imposed by Ukrainian government. At present we have some 150 students in Ukraine mainly in various medical, engineering and business institutions in major cities of Ukraine like Kiev, Kharkov, Lviv, Vinnytsia etc. Generally speaking Pakistani students do not face any major difficulty in adjusting in Ukraine. At present there are no direct flights between Ukraine and Pakistan. However, we are negotiating an Air Services Agreement that would provide a framework for airlines of both countries to start operating direct flights. For the moment, airlines that transit through Gulf region and Istanbul provide convenient flight options to visit Pakistan.

The year 2014 was a difficult year for Ukraine and Ukrainian government mostly had to focus on internal situation. But with formation of a new government in Kyiv, both sides have started focusing on stepping up efforts to strengthen bilateral relations.

In the end, I would like to wish «Diplomatic Ukraine» and all its readers health and happiness. At the same time, I would like to invite the readers who belong to business and investment community take advantage of attractive trade and investment opportunities offered by Pakistan's economy. To the general readers, I would like to say that they should visit my country. Pakistan has so many tourist attractions including cultural, historical, archeological and those relating to natural beauty and landscapes. Already some Ukrainian do visit Pakistan for tourism purpose but I would like to host more of them. The Embassy will extend full support in facilitating such visits.