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PRESS RELEASE

Ambassador Lecture Series Post-Brexit Foreign Policy: Future of Pakistan-UK Relations 4 September 2018



- The United Kingdom has a very direct and unique stake in Pakistan's long-term future stability, security and prosperity. Both countries face shared challenges and opportunities which is the bedrock of Pakistan-UK relations.
- UK's relationship with Pakistan is not a discretionary one. Both countries' mutual interests are intimately tied to each other's success.
- More than 2 per cent of the UK's population now traces its roots back to Pakistan. British Pakistanis have a significant contribution to the social, economic, academic, cultural, and political fabric of the country, with 12 members in the House of Commons of Pakistani origin.
- UK is focused on helping Pakistan unleash its potential.

This was stated by H.E. Mr Thomas Drew, British High Commissioner to Pakistan at the Ambassador Lecture on 'Post-Brexit Foreign Policy: Future of Pakistan-UK Relations' convened under Ambassador Lecture Series by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute, here in Islamabad today.

Speaking to a packed audience of diplomats, bureaucrats, students and journalists, the High Commissioner stated that the UK's diplomatic mission to Pakistan is the second biggest in the world; and its development programme in Pakistan, through DFID, is the largest such bilateral programme in the world and stands at half a billion dollars. 'In fact, the UK spends more on development aid in Pakistan than any other country or organisation', he said. The High Commissioner shared that what happens in Pakistan has a real world impact upon the UK - in a way that is true of few other countries. 'The UK has a

very direct and unique stake in Pakistan's future stability, security and prosperity. Together, we face some shared challenges and opportunities. That is the bedrock of the Pakistan-UK relationship.'



Discussing Britain's exit from the European Union, the High Commissioner stressed that 'The UK is reshaping its place in the world. Clearly, the decision to leave the EU has far-reaching consequences for our relationship with the continent.' He reaffirmed that 'while we are changing our political relationship with the EU, we are not leaving Europe, and our friends on the Continent. Furthermore, our commitment to international security has not changed, nor will it.'

Outlining a positive vision for the future of its relationship with Pakistan, the British High Commissioner outlined that the UK is focused on 'helping Pakistan to unleash its potential' which will benefit both Pakistan in its own right as well as be the best guarantor of the UK's defensive interests. 'Most importantly, particularly in the post-Brexit world, the UK and Pakistan can benefit from each other's economic success. Many people forget that Pakistan is the 6th most populous country in the world and growing fast. If Punjab were a country, it would be the world's 11th largest. We don't always think of Karachi, the world's 6th largest city, as in the same economic league as Shanghai, Mumbai or Sao Paolo. But we should. I predict that we will. Pakistan-UK ties are uniquely placed to work alongside each other, and to benefit from its success.'

The British High Commissioner concluded by stressing the importance of a shared vision for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Pakistan becoming once again the vibrant hub of trade and commerce that its geography and size demand. The British High Commissioner hoped that in the not too distant future, trade and investment will form the central plank of Pakistan-UK relationship. 'The UK is Pakistan's biggest trading partner in Europe and third biggest investor globally. This will be the best guarantee of the future stability and prosperity of both countries, particularly in the post-Brexit world.'

Earlier, IPRI's President Ambassador (R) Abdul Basit in his welcome address said that inter-state relations are not linear. There are always ups and downs. Relations which are inherently robust and resilient are able to absorb these shocks and relations; those which are not, unfortunately, remain transactional. 'Pakistan-UK relations have moved from strength-to-strength,' he said, and acknowledged Britain's contributions in strengthening Pakistan's education and health sectors, among others. 'British Pakistanis are playing a hugely important role in this relationship and are a living bridge between the two countries.' He was of the view that there is undoubtedly huge potential in this relationship which has not yet been tapped fully. He was hopeful that Pakistan-UK relationship will continue to grow in the future. 'We attach great importance to Pakistan's relationship with the UK, particularly economic and trade relationship. Britain remains our largest trading partner in Europe', he said.

