

Friends of Pakistan statement (29/09/2008)



The Foreign Ministers of Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Turkey, and representatives of the European Union and the United Nations met under the co-chairmanship of President Zardari of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Foreign Ministers of United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States, to launch the Friends of Pakistan Group in New York on Friday, 26 September.

Those present congratulated President Zardari on his election as President and noted the significant opportunities for Pakistan under democratically-elected, civilian leadership. They made clear their determination to support the Government of Pakistan in its efforts to consolidate democracy to enable the people of Pakistan to benefit from this historic opportunity. They expressed their outrage at acts of terrorism in Pakistan, in particular the recent attack on the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, and made clear that the Group of Friends stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Pakistan in its fight against such terrorism.

The Group of Friends noted the formidable challenges Pakistan faces and the importance of well-co-ordinated international co-operation as the Government works to address them. They welcomed the Pakistani leadership's focus on national development as a strategic priority and desire to promote peace and stability in both the country and the region.

With this in mind, the Friends agreed that the Group should work in strategic partnership with the Government of Pakistan and other relevant partners in the following areas:

Stability

The meeting recognised the significant problem of violent extremism in Pakistan and looks to Pakistan to lead the fight against this extremism, with the support of the international community. The Group committed to work with the Government of Pakistan to develop an overarching Pakistani-led strategy and to provide technical assistance for this.

Development

The meeting agreed to develop a comprehensive approach to the economic and social development of Pakistan, with a particular focus on education, health, and human development. The Group acknowledged the need for Pakistan to undertake serious economic reform and

agreed to look at improved trade access for Pakistan to their markets. The Group also agreed to encourage private sector involvement in Pakistan's development.

Border areas

The meeting noted the importance of the border areas to the overall territorial integrity of Pakistan, as well as the impact the situation there was having beyond Pakistan. The Group agreed to form a partnership with Pakistan to develop a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to the security, development, and political needs of the border.

Energy

The Group agreed to look at ways of addressing Pakistan's energy shortfall.

Institution-building

The Group agreed on the importance of supporting Pakistan's democratic institutions, including in support of economic reform, rule of law, good governance and countering extremism. At the request of the Government of Pakistan, the Group agreed that a special representative should be appointed from a member nation or organisation to take forward the above agenda. The Group agreed to meet again at official level in Abu Dhabi within a month to determine a detailed programme of work to take forward the above agenda.