

**PRESIDENT'S SECRETARIAT (PUBLIC)**  
**PRESS WING**

-----

**Karachi: November 15, 2017:** President Mamnoon Hussain has said that United States efforts to prop up India as a major power of the region can seriously jeopardize the peace in this region. He emphasized that Kashmir issue is the major obstacle in the restoration of peace in the region and without its resolution peace in the region would remain a dream adding that it is important for regional peace that all outstanding issues must be resolved through dialogue.

The President said this while addressing the conference on Peace in South Asia organized by Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (PIIA) in Karachi on Wednesday. Chairperson PIIA Dr. Masooma Hassan also spoke on the occasion.

The President stated that currently South Asia is facing many conflicts & crises and peace in the region is at stake because of various unresolved political and geographical issues. These challenges have been made more complex by global situation particularly the Cold War, deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and the menace of terrorism, he added. The President underlined that these decades' old factors have profoundly impacted the region's political, socio-economic and security environment adding that strategic environment in South Asia underwent a paradigm shift when India and Pakistan became nuclear powers, since then, the regional situation is being adversely affected due to factors operating at three levels i.e. domestic, regional and global and it is imperative to objectively evaluate it.

The President underscored that unresolved conflicts of Jammu & Kashmir, Sir Creek and Siachen are the major hurdles in achieving stability in South Asia. He further said that after the tragedy of 9/11, turmoil in Afghanistan has further made these matters worse which has given rise to multifaceted security issues in the region. He stated that the deteriorating situation in Kashmir has also adversely affected the regional peace. He pointed out that Kashmiris are engaged in a legitimate struggle to exercise their right of self-determination while India is unjustly trying to designate this movement of Kashmiri people as terrorism which has further aggravated tension in the South Asia. He highlighted that India's ongoing arms build-up poses a serious threat to the regional stability which could lead to undesirable arms race between

the two neighbors at the cost of their economic and social progress which can impact the region negatively.

The President said that whole region of South Asia is in search for peace and prosperity but the blessings of peace and development have become elusive due to conflicts whereas this situation can be aptly tackled through regional cooperation and settling longstanding disputes. He further stated that destiny of South Asian nations is linked with each other and only through mutual cooperation they can fight poverty, unemployment, climate change, militancy and other public issues. But the journey to find peace and prosperity can go in vain in case of conflicts which is the major cause for abject poverty, social backwardness, extremism and radicalization. He added that it is imperative to sincerely promote mutual cooperation to alleviate poverty in order to bring improvement in social conditions.

The President highlighted that China's growing interest and investment in the region is very beneficial for South Asia adding that for this great purpose, we should create conducive environment for peace and mutual cooperation by taking advantage of important initiatives of regional connectivity like "One Belt, One Road", China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and facility of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). He said that it will attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the region which is presently very low when compared to the other regions. He stated that along-with promoting economic cooperation and regional connectivity, there is also a need to focus more on stabilizing Afghanistan because only a stable Afghanistan can become a great transit corridor connecting Central, South and West Asia. He emphasized that international community should play its role to attain peace and stability in Afghanistan. He underlined that these two objectives can be achieved successfully by making the platform of SAARC effective for which it is necessary to strengthen regional connectivity and people-to-people contacts. He stated that there is a need to avoid fanning regional differences and visa policy needs to be liberalized for business purposes. He pointed out that these measures will ensure faster economic growth in the region which will lead to elimination of poverty and provision of employment opportunities through economic cooperation, activation of regional contacts and infrastructure development. He added that mutual cooperation in the field of energy will be helpful in further cementing these ties.

The President stressed that South Asian countries need to evolve unity on the pattern of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to ensure durable progress in the region. He stated that it is also important to resolve mutual differences and conflicts through dialogue and political process rather than through instruments of coercion and force. He further said that for these purposes, in addition to SAARC, the platform of SCO is also available for achieving regional integration.

\*\*\*\*\*