



**Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent
Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations at the debate
of the UN General Assembly on the Zones of peace, trust and
cooperation of Central Asia
(16 May 2023)**

Madam President,

The Pakistan delegation once again thanks Turkmenistan and you for the historic initiative which led to the adoption of the GA resolution 76/299 last year to declare Central Asia as a Zone of Peace. We welcome this important debate to consider steps to consolidation of this Zone of Peace.

2. In a world where conflicts and tensions have proliferated in several regions, the creation of zones of peace in critical parts of the world can serve as a vital instrument for stability and an avenue for regional and cross-regional cooperation.

3. Pakistan has made consistent efforts to promote peace and cooperation in its own and adjacent regions. Pakistan actively advocated the creation of a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in South Asia for over two decades. This was thwarted by the nuclear explosions initiated by our neighbor. Pakistan has also supported the creation of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, in accordance with the declaration in the UN General Assembly in resolution 2832 (XXVI). We are concerned that the Indian Ocean is being drawn into a geo-strategic construct that implies renewed great power rivalry and the emergence of new military alliances. These developments could destabilize large parts of Asia, the Pacific and even Africa.

4. In the face of these steps that escalate great power military and political competition, it is all the more vital to preserve Central Asia as a Zone of Peace. A peaceful Central Asia can be a bulwark against the extension of conflict from Europe to Asia. Instead, it can serve as a bridge of peace across the Eurasian landmass.

5. Located at the juncture of South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia, the Arabia Sea and the Indian Ocean, Pakistan has a vital stake in the preservation of Central Asia as a Zone of Peace. With the Central Asian States, Pakistan shares membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as well as Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). These two coterminous organizations can form the critical component of the endeavours to build security and prosperity across Eurasia.

6. Both Pakistan and Central Asia also accord the highest priority to ensuring durable peace and stability in Afghanistan. The platform of Afghanistan's 6 neighbours plus Russia, which includes 3 Central Asian countries, is a vital forum to promote peace, stability and economic development in Afghanistan. In turn, once it is stabilized, Afghanistan will serve as the critical connection for regional cooperation, between Central Asia, Pakistan and all the countries who are committed to the early implementation of the several shovel-ready connectivity projects, including the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline, the CASA electricity grid from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Railway.

7. Last week, the Pakistan-China-Afghanistan trilateral Ministerial meeting in Islamabad agreed to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan. This will further reinforce the close connection between Central Asia and Afghanistan, Pakistan and China.

8. Such economic integration within Central Asia and with its adjacent regions will unleash the vast productive potential of these regions. Their prosperity will in turn consolidate peace and security, including in the Central Asian Zone of Peace.

I thank you.