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Press Release**

Hina Rabbani Khar hails ‘unique’ ASEAN Spirit

Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, has hailed “a unique ASEAN Spirit” achieved successfully by the ASEAN member states through “peaceful means, harmony, consensus and at a pace acceptable to all”.

“ASEAN represents a true success story ... the milestone achievements of ASEAN demonstrate how nations can convert challenges into opportunities and visions into realities,” she said in a statement read out on the 1st ASEAN Day Flag Raising Ceremony held at the Embassy of Indonesia in Islamabad.

Ms. Khar said the 8th of August marks a historic day in the annals of ASEAN. “It not only reminds us of the signing of the momentous ASEAN Declaration in 1967, but also symbolizes the unity and support of the member countries for the principles and objectives of ASEAN,” she said, adding the day also “signifies the commitment of the peoples of the region to achieve an ASEAN Community by 2015”.

She said Pakistan wanted a FULL Dialogue Partnership with ASEAN. “We are also desirous of concluding a FREE Trade Agreement with the ASEAN region,” she said, hoping with the support of the member countries, Pakistan and ASEAN will be able to conclude these landmark achievements.

She said Pakistan greatly values its association with ASEAN. “Our relations with the ASEAN region are based on cultural, economic, and historical bonds and it is a matter of satisfaction to observe that our relations with ASEAN have grown steadily,” she said, adding Pakistan’s trade with the ASEAN region had already crossed US \$5 billion and it was expected to grow further in the near future.

Giving an overview of Pakistan’s association with ASEAN, Ms. Rabbani Khar recalled that Pakistan started the Joint Sectoral Cooperation Committee meetings with ASEAN in 1999. Pakistan launched its ‘East Asia Policy’ in 2003, signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) - and joined to be an active member of ARF - in 2004.

She said Pakistan also signed with ASEAN a ‘Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat Terrorism’ in 2005 and subsequently launched ASEAN-Pakistan Fund with an annual allocation of US \$50,000 in 2006, enhancing its contribution to US \$1 million in 2007.

Ms. Khar said since joining Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in 2007, Pakistan has actively participated in ARF and ASEM and regularly contributed towards the Asia Europe Foundation. She said a Feasibility Study for ASEAN-Pakistan FTA completed in 2009 had posted “very positive” results and the country was keen on early consideration of the results of the Feasibility Study to move ahead towards an eventual ASEAN-Pakistan FTA. She said Pakistan had also joined the ranks of other important Dialogue Partners to accredit its envoy in Indonesia as Pakistan’s ambassador to ASEAN, in February 2010.

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