

## Jauhar Saleem: Relations between Uzbekistan and Pakistan demonstrate steady growth and cover all key areas of cooperation



On January 29 this year, the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, jointly with the Institute of Regional Studies of Pakistan and with the support of the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Pakistan, organized an expert online conference titled “Uzbekistan – Pakistan: Strategic Partnership, Connectivity, and Sustainable Development in a Changing World”.

Delivering the opening remarks at the conference, President of the Institute of Regional Studies Islamabad (IRS), Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, highlighted the high level of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. According to him, the heads of state play a decisive role in strengthening trust and advancing practical initiatives, thereby creating a solid foundation for strategic dialogue and the implementation of joint projects. “Relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan are at an excellent level”, the Ambassador stated, adding that the leaders’ summits in 2021 and 2025 “clearly demonstrate both sides’ commitment to deepening multifaceted cooperation covering the economy, trade, energy, education, culture, tourism, and people-to-people contacts”.

Jauhar Saleem particularly emphasized that the potential for bilateral cooperation is “enormous and tremendous – whether in trade, investment cooperation, energy collaboration, people-to-people contacts, tourism, or educational and cultural exchanges”. At the same time, he underscored the key task of translating this potential into tangible results. “That is precisely why in recent years we have witnessed much more active engagement at the highest level. When high-level visits take place – whether it is the Prime Minister of Pakistan visiting Uzbekistan or the President of Uzbekistan traveling to Pakistan – they are accompanied by delegations of senior officials, representatives of the business community, academia, business leaders, and experts from various fields. This creates an excellent opportunity for dialogue, discussions among leaders across sectors, the generation of ideas, and the identification of ways and mechanisms to strengthen cooperation and launch new areas of engagement”.

In the economic dimension, Jauhar Saleem emphasized Pakistan's intention to transition to an export-oriented development model: "All examples of successful transformations of developing countries into developed ones – such as South Korea or Taiwan – are based precisely on export-led growth. Pakistan seeks to transform from a consumption-oriented economy into one driven by exports". He highlighted Pakistan's competitive advantages, including textiles, leather goods, fruits and vegetables, meat products, sporting goods, handicrafts (carpets and rugs), and surgical instruments.

At the same time, he noted that Uzbekistan is also actively expanding its export product range and markets, creating opportunities for joint growth and synergy: "I see significant opportunities for cooperation within these shared aspirations, as both countries are following a similar path. This opens up considerable potential for creating synergy".

To realize this potential, a land connection through Afghanistan is required within the framework of the Trans-Afghan Corridor, which links Central and South Asia. The President of the Institute of Regional Studies Islamabad underscored the strategic importance of the project: "This project and this vision must be translated into reality, as they can provide a powerful boost to bilateral trade... Pakistan and Uzbekistan are highly interested in its implementation. I am convinced that in the coming years this project will turn from a dream and a vision into reality". He also noted that transport connectivity would contribute not only to economic development but also to strengthening regional stability and interconnection, opening up new opportunities for business, logistics, and market integration.

Beyond the traditional areas of cooperation, Jauhar Saleem highlighted new directions, primarily information technology: "Pakistan has a rapidly growing population, a significant share of which is young people. We have one of the largest pools of qualified IT professionals in the world. That is why I see enormous prospects for expanding cooperation between Pakistan and Uzbekistan in this field". He proposed joint projects in software exports, the establishment of data centers, the development of consulting companies, the launch of startups, and other innovative initiatives, emphasizing technological cooperation as a strategic priority.

Overall, the President of the Institute of Regional Studies Islamabad, Jauhar Saleem, highly praised the steady progress of bilateral relations, noting their strategic importance and broad potential for cooperation. At the same time, he called for even more active progress on the bilateral agenda, emphasizing the importance of this process amid ongoing economic and social transformation. He paid particular attention to the role of the expert community and the need for closer dialogue among specialists, business representatives, and academics.

In this context, Jauhar Saleem supported the idea of establishing an Expert Council between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, highlighting its importance as a platform for continuous dialogue and the development of practical recommendations. In his view, such a council would promote "discussions among leaders across various sectors, the generation of ideas, and the identification of ways and mechanisms to strengthen cooperation and launch new areas of engagement", ensuring systematic coordination among experts, business representatives, and the academic community to realize the potential of bilateral relations.

The conference was attended by the heads of the two countries' diplomatic missions, as well as leadership and experts from leading think tanks and educational institutions in Uzbekistan and Pakistan. The conference was recognized as an essential practical step toward establishing a sustainable expert platform to deepen the strategic partnership between Uzbekistan and Pakistan and strengthen ties between Central and South Asia.

**Source**