

Draft Statement by H.E. Khawaja Muhammad Asif
The Foreign Minister of Pakistan.

Honourable Ministers of Foreign Affairs

Distinguished Heads of Delegation

Honourable Secretary General of the D-8

Esteemed Commissioners

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is matter of honor and privilege for me to attend the 17th Session of D-8 Council of Foreign Ministers in Istanbul, the birth place of the D-8 organization and a city I greatly love.

Pakistan assumed the Chairmanship of this Organization at 8th D-8 Summit held in Islamabad in November 2012. We continued this responsibility beyond the normal term of two years. We are very thankful to the Member States and the D-8 Secretariat for their support and cooperation to our Chairmanship. We are also thankful to Secretary General Dr. Mousavi for enhancing D-8 visibility and giving it a new drive. As a member, Pakistan supported the D-8 Secretariat in achieving the aims and objectives of the Organization.

Twenty years ago, the D-8 was established with the objectives of collaboration in economic development among member states, and to enhance our contribution to leverage in the decision making at the international level. I have firm conviction that our collective efforts for the economic development agenda will enable us to achieve our goals sooner than later.

Since its inception, D-8 has achieved significant milestones. The Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), agreement on simplification of visa procedures for businessmen and D-8 Customs Agreement are few of them. When implemented by all members, these agreements will help boost trade among the member countries.

Excellencies,

It was a matter of great satisfaction for us that with the help of Members States, Pakistan, as D-8 Chair, successfully steered the process of obtaining 'Observer Status' for the Organization at the United Nations. This idea was envisaged in the Global Vision adopted by the D-8 leaders during Islamabad Summit in November 2012. The status enables the D-8 to engage with various UN Agencies and institutions with a view to cooperate in mutually beneficial areas. This has also raised the profile of D-8. We also organized the special Sessions of the Council of Foreign Minister on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York in 2014-2016.

The theme "Expanding Opportunities Through Cooperation" for this Summit is very appropriate. It reflects the purposes and objectives of the Economic Organization.

We consider D-8 an important platform to identify ways to enhance mutually beneficial cooperation. Since its establishment, Member States have covered much ground on identifying areas that offer opportunities for collaboration. Over the last two decades, we have been able to provide a strong foundation for cooperation in various areas. Now, it is time to embark on the more challenging phase – the implementation. As the D-8 enters a new phase; we all must renew our resolve for the attainment of our goals and objectives. Pakistan is

fully aware of the potential that this organization possesses due to an unusual pattern of its Member States encompassing three continents. The need of the hour is to tap it with stringent efforts and hardwork in all the six priority areas of cooperation mentioned in the D-8 Charter namely; Industry, Trade, Transportation, Agriculture & Food Security, Energy & Minerals and Tourism. I take this opportunity to assure you that Pakistan is ready to extend full support and cooperation in ensuring the attainment of concrete results in all fields.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the past 4 years, the Government of Pakistan has taken necessary structural reforms and stabilizing measures to reinvigorate economy. As a result, Pakistan's economic indicators have improved. Our economic policies are liberal, business friendly and forward looking. The international financial institutions as well as renowned economists have recognized Pakistan's economic performance. We are forecasting around 6 percent of GDP in the current fiscal year and have planned to achieve around 7 percent growth target in next two years. The improved security situation has created an enabling environment for trade and investment.

Our Government's top priorities are infrastructure development including energy, education, and economy and elimination of the remnants of terrorism and extremism. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project has created significant positive impact on Pakistan's economy as well as for regional connectivity. It is estimated that sustained regional cooperation has the potential to add further 2 percent to Pakistan's GDP per year.

Excellencies,

Let me apprise you of Pakistan's efforts in counter-terrorism. Due to unparalleled sacrifices and a strategy, based on national consensus, Pakistan is winning its war against terrorism. The incidents of terrorism in Pakistan have seen a marked decline - with a salutary impact on economic and commercial activity. This was made possible because Pakistan has pursued a zero-tolerance and indiscriminate approach in its campaign against all terrorist and militant groups.

Excellencies,

It is my privilege and honor to hand over Chairmanship of D-8 Council of Ministers to H.E. Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Turkey. I congratulate the Republic of Turkey on assuming the Chairmanship of D-8 and I am confident that under the Chairmanship of Turkey the Organization will witness the transition from policy formulation to project implementation phase.

I Thank you all.