

## WELCOME SPEECH

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Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to address such a distinguished audience comprising reputable academicians, scholars, researchers, politicians, diplomats. Undoubtedly, the participation of the Russian Ambassador to Islamabad H. E. Albert Khorev and the Pakistani Ambassador to Moscow H. E. Muhammad Khalid Jamali inspires hope that today's deliberations will have practical output.

2024 is an election year. In February, there will be national elections in Pakistan, and in March Russia will hold her presidential elections. It looks like the February vote will signify Pakistan's return to its traditional two-party system where Muslim League and People's Party dominate. No change of guard is expected in Russia. Importantly, both the Russian and the Pakistani ruling elites strive for further strengthening of relations between our nations. Being aware that the world has become extremely dangerous, Moscow and Islamabad are promoting the spirit of cooperation and equality in the international arena — as opposed to global confrontation and neocolonialism. We stand shoulder to shoulder against Islamophobia and all other kinds of extremism including the neocon ideology. Our social fabric is similar. Russian and Pakistani societies are based on traditions and family values. That said, I am optimistic about the future of Russian-Pakistani friendship.

Thank you for your attention.

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