

SVI – Ambassador’s Talk March 28, 2017: Report
Pakistan-Romanian Relations



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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) organized the Ambassador's Talk on "Pakistan-Romanian Relations" on Tuesday 28th March, 2017 at the SVI Conference room. His Excellency Nicolae GOIA – Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Romania to Pakistan was invited to discuss Pakistan-Romania Relations.

The discussion was chaired by Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, President/Executive Director SVI. He said that the SVI feels privileged that Ambassador Nicolae GOIA has consented to speak here on Pakistan-Romania relations. Dr. Cheema offered his thanks to the distinguished guests and participants for gracing the occasion with their presence. He introduced the topic by saying that Romania and Pakistan have always enjoyed excellent relationship since 1964. Pakistan-Romania bi-lateral relations have always remained positive. Hence, despite being best of cordiality in the relationship, it is imperative to expand the bilateral relations into various areas of economic, cultural and technological cooperation between two countries.



Ambassador Nicolae GOIA thanked the SVI for allowing him to share his views on the Pakistan-Romanian relations. He started his speech by presenting brief profile of Romania to give a detailed overview of Pakistan-Romania relations. He added that Romania is a middle sized (according to European standards) European country located in the Eastern Europe. It has an area of 237 square kilometers, with over 20 million inhabitants. It is the country with population of Roman Latin origin, speaks Roman language which is the only neo-Latin language in the world. Romania has a developing economy with the medium to high level income. Its GDP is EUR 22,000 according to 2016 statistics. GDP made by industries is 36%, while 11% comes from agriculture, and 52% is in the services. Most important regional economic partners of Romania are the European Union (EU) and United Kingdom (UK).

His Excellency maintained that Romania has excellent relations with Pakistan in all aspects. Romania has long standing cooperation with Pakistan in political, economic, cultural

and scientific fields. Most important element of Pakistan-Romanian relations is that their bilateral relations are based on mutual trust. He emphasized that trust is the most important mechanism of diplomacy and relations between the states. He shared that Romania has a pragmatic foreign policy having a result oriented approach. Romanian officials have over the period of time been engaged in extremely dynamic result oriented dialogue with Pakistan aiming at progress in all fields of cooperation between the two countries. Both countries have been holding regular bi-lateral Political Consultations at the Foreign Minister level. So far eight rounds of bilateral consultative meetings have been held with the aim to define future objectives of political relations between the two. The Ambassador expressed that Romania is honored to have received Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on 22nd December 2016 for a very short visit. During the meeting of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif with the Romanian leadership a number of agreements were put on the table, while it was decided that further steps will be taken for developing the relations in the economic sphere. Romania is also in the process of starting a new round of political consultation which will be held in Bucharest this year (2017). He shared that Romanian officials are looking forward to the possibility of signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between two Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

Ambassador Nicolae GOIA expressed that Romania enjoys a solid and stable economic growth which is stimulated by its keen economic orientation. In 2017, Romania has been termed as the fastest growing economy in EU for two years in a row. Just like Pakistan, Romania also has an extremely developed IT sector. The information technology center could be the base for enlarging relations and cooperation with Pakistan. He emphasized on the fact that Pakistan being an important trading partner is playing a significant role in maintaining peace and fighting terrorism. His Excellency highlighted that being the Ambassador he puts trading ties very high on the agenda to identify new projects and to encourage business community to invest more in each other's countries. He insisted on working towards rejoining the joint commission activity by identifying the means and possibilities to reconvene these joint commission activities with the aim to stimulate the relations between the two states. While talking about the projects that the two countries are already undertaking, he mentioned that one of the promising projects is building and exporting trucks to Pakistan. Other projects

include assembly tractors. He expressed that he feels the responsibility to address common interests through common initiatives, making use of instruments like exchanging the economic information among the governmental institutions, organizing economic seminars, and economic symposium in Romania and Pakistan. Romanian companies are also providing their expertise in the industrial construction of projects of major importance in Pakistan such as shipbuilding and energy. Romania also encourages Pakistani companies to invest in Romanian productive sectors such as leather industry, pharmaceutical products, textile, and agriculture. He also shared that almost 716 Pakistani investments are in Romania, which is not a big number and efforts could be made to expand it further.

Romania and Pakistan are in the process to identify the mechanism and possible ways to establish joint ventures. In this regard efforts are being made to revitalize Pak-Romania Business Council, which is based in Karachi. He further added that Romania is also interested in other sectors including hydrothermal power, and equipment for refineries etc. In this regard it is significant to note that Romania has remained active in refinery development sectors and has built a refinery in Karachi, three cement factories, and tractor assembly lines. It shows that Romania has the required expertise and experience to work with Pakistani friends in extremely important and vital sectors of the economy. It is also cooperating in exports of its expertise in helicopters manufacturing and training the Pakistani staff in this industry. Defence cooperation between both states will provide new dimensions to peaceful bilateral relations in terms of defence production. While talking about the importance of cultural ties with Pakistan, the Ambassador stated that Pakistan carries rich and strong historical and cultural values. Pakistan and Romania are also planning to initiate the cultural and sports exchange programs.

He also stressed upon people to people interaction for better understanding about each other. In this regard Romania is offering generous scholarship in the field of education for Pakistani students. He also highlighted that both states have the same positions on global issues of contemporary world. Romania has supported Pakistan's candidacy for non-permanent membership of United Nation Security Council (UNSC) and Romania is confident that Pakistan will support the Romanian candidacy for non-permanent membership of UNSC for the upcoming elections this year.

While talking about the CPEC he added that it is a major economic project in Pakistan offering immense opportunities for the states outside Asia to participate by exporting their expertise in building various projects. Therefore, Romania is also evaluating its prospects for joining CPEC. He maintained that a large number of countries would want to be part of the CPEC in coming future. Lack of connectivity exists in this region due to various political issues. Hence CPEC can be viewed as a mechanism of connectivity in the region.

He concluded his talk by expressing satisfaction over the trajectory of bilateral relations in different areas including economy, defence, parliamentary exchanges, education and culture. Simultaneously he stressed on the need for exploring new avenues of cooperation, especially in the fields of agriculture, textile and energy.

Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema thanked His Excellency for his outstanding and thought provoking remarks on Pakistan-Romanian relationship and opened the floor for questions.

Vice Admiral (R) Ahmed Tasnim asked the reason as to why the EU countries including Romania are only interested in participating in CPEC as contractors while there hardly is any mention of investment from their side? In response Ambassador Nicolae GOIA shared that it has to be a two way traffic. Pakistan needs to extend investment offers to the countries at the governmental level. He expressed that in case of Romania also no concrete initiative has been taken by Pakistan to involve the business community of Bucharest.



Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, President/Executive Director, SVI asked that despite Romania's highly developed industry particularly in science and technology, why are there such low number of Pakistani students in Romania? Could language barrier be the reason for that? How could the improvement be brought about in these kinds of exchanges? Ambassador Nicolae GOIA remarked that in the past Romania used to have big number of Pakistani students. Unfortunately, since last decade the number has decreased systematically due to financial situation of Ministry of Education. Romania is allocating less

number of scholarships generally to all the countries. Language is another issue because of which the Pakistani students are more inclined towards going to London or other English speaking country. He stated that he will put it in his agenda to make efforts to increase the numbers of scholarships for Pakistani students.

Mr. Shams uz Zaman, an Independent Analyst asked the Ambassador if there is a possibility for the two countries to cooperate in the defence sector and if there are any prospects for the manufacturing of equipment related to defence Industry? Ambassador Nicolae GOIA shared that Romania has some defence related agreements under consideration and Romania is very keen to sign these agreements with Pakistan. Pakistan is cooperating with many countries in defence sector and Romania is one of them.



Lt. Gen (R) Saeed uz Zaman deliberated that for any long term relationship between the states, it is important to focus on people's participation through cultural activities, and cooperation in educational and health sectors. He asked if there are any ongoing programs or any planned for the future to provide higher education facilities to Pakistani students.



Ambassador Nicolae GOIA responded by highlighting the significance of Romanian education system and agreed that people to people relations are important to develop bilateral ties among the two states. He shared that for this particular purpose, he has in his mind various programs which will make the exchange of delegations possible among both states.

In this regard Romania is holding talks with Ministers in Pakistan and is looking forward to finding confident pragmatic ideas and means to make the people of two countries to get in contact with each other.



Senator (R) Khalid Rahim suggested that establishing the cultural centers in cities of Pakistan will help the students to learn Romanian language. Such Pakistan-Romania cultural centers will not only help in learning the Romanian language but it will also provide the understanding of each other's cultures.

Mr. Atle Hetland, Senior Norwegian Social Scientist suggested that Norway tries to work with the Nordic countries. In theory it looks easy and good but practically it is very difficult. He suggested that both Norway and Romania are only 25 million people who should be working together for the prosperity of both the states. Ambassador Nicolae GOIA responded that European Union provides a significant framework for both Romania and Norway to enhance mutual cooperation.



Mr. Muhammad Sarmid Zia, Research Associate from Centre of International Strategic



Studies (CISS) asked what practical measures Romania can take regarding visa regime for facilitating Pakistani students and tourists wishing to go to Romania? The ambassador shared that the visa regime is a tough matter for Romania because being the member of EU; it is still not the member of Schengen agreement. Romania is trying to get the membership of Schengen agreement to facilitate the free movement of people across the borders.

Mr. Pervez Butt, former Chairman of Pakistan Energy Commission, presented his view in the context of nuclear activities. He added that industrial activities of Romania are highly impressive. Pakistan and Romania both bought CANDU reactors from Canada. While the technical capabilities are given credit for Pakistan's nuclear power plants' efficient working, it is significant to recognize that Pakistani people are also quite capable. Unfortunately Pakistanis don't have the industry to express their capabilities. In this regard he suggested that the Romanian officials in Pakistan can encourage the manufacturers and set up industries in Pakistan.



Ambassador (R) Akram Zaki highlighted that it is fortunate that Pakistan and Romania share positive history of bilateral relationship. And currently Pakistan is poised at a stage when things are turning out in the right direction. Global situation is always evolving and Pakistan has remained overcommitted to developing relations with the West in the past. Now circumstances are changing and Pakistan is in focus due to developmental projects like CPEC. With advance industrial capabilities of Romania and technical man power of Pakistan, there is a good potential to foster future interests.



Mr. Lokhaze Ali, Senior Environmentalist asked what sort of advertisement will be required to attract Romanian investors and what particular areas they would like to invest under CPEC. Ambassador Nicolae GOIA stated that he is not an expert on the areas in which Romanian Business community would like to invest. CPEC could be one area where the countries should be offered to invest. Government of Pakistan should go through the assessment of the areas and specialization of each country for attracting investment in CPEC.

Mr. Muhammad Adil Sivia, Research Associate, SVI asked the Ambassador to elaborate on expansion of NSG and Pakistan's application for NSG membership, keeping in view the reciprocal diplomatic support that both countries extend to each other in international organizations. Ambassador Nicolae GOIA responded that Romania will continue to pursue the objective of global nonproliferation and eventual nuclear disarmament, which however doesn't seem to be a possibility in the near future. His Excellency shared that by making this application Pakistan has showed commitment for upholding global nonproliferation efforts. He believed that the accession process will take time, requiring Pakistan to meet lots of conditions before being able to become a member. He stated that Pakistan fulfills majority of the criteria set for NSG membership and at the moment Romania is analyzing Pakistan's application for NSG membership. In doing so, Romania is making assessment regarding expansion of NSG and



limiting nuclear weapons. On a personal note he also expressed that Pakistan has a fair chance of becoming the member of NSG in coming future.



Ms. Sadia Kazmi, Director Academics and Senior Research Associate, SVI asked about the potential and possibility of VARP (Vietnam, Argentina, Romania and Pakistan) leading the global economy in the coming future since it is being widely speculated that after BRICS the new focus should be on VARP in terms of potential for offering growth and investment opportunities.

Ambassador Nicolae GOIA added that BRICS remains to be an important block of emerging economies which are cooperating in important areas. He opined that in his views, in international politics one organization seldom replaces another. Competition for improving economy is a positive step among organizations.

In the end Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, President/Executive Director SVI commended Ambassador Nicolae GOIA for his candid and thought provoking remarks on further improving Pakistan-Romanian bilateral Relationship.

Media Coverage

The event also received extensive media coverage:

The Express Tribune

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1368143/romania-wants-slice-cpec/>

Daily Times

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:vfw7DXiyE8J:dailytimes.com.pk/business/29-Mar-17/romania-expresses-desire-to-become-part-of-cpec-ry+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=pk>

Times of Islamabad

<https://timesofislamabad.com/79481-2/2017/03/28/>

Pak-China News

<http://pakchinanews.pk/cpec-connect-region-trade-corridor-romanian-ambassador/>

Associated Press of Pakistan

<https://www.app.com.pk/cpec-to-connect-region-through-trade-corridor-romanian-ambassador/>

Diplomatic News Agency

<http://www.dnanews.com.pk/romania-svi-pakistan/>