

Address by H.E. Malik Amin Aslam Khan

Federal Minister - Climate Change / Advisor to Prime Minister

**25th Session of Conference of Parties (COP-25) to the United Nations
Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**
(11-12 December 2019 Madrid, Spain)

Your Excellency, Ms. Carolina Schmidt, President of COP 25
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,
Madam Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Madam President,

Let me take this opportunity to first congratulate the Government and people of Chile for assuming the presidency of COP-25 and to convey our appreciation to the Government of Spain for their support in hosting the conference in the beautiful city of Madrid. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts put in by the government of Poland in their capacity as Presidency of COP 24 in carrying forward the climate agenda.

Madam President

Let us not be under any illusion.

The world, as shaped by us, is now on a warpath with nature and we, the political shapers of this situation, are collectively leading the charge brigade. While nature may be resilient, it is *no longer* silent and an era of consequences is already upon us. The virulent cyclones, rising heat waves, freak floods, melting glaciers and rising sea levels are all vivid and living indicators of not only our failing battle but also of nature's forceful reply.

Madam President, this battle against nature is not a battle that *can be won* nor a battle that *should* be won. Instead, a collective retreat is needed to try and take nature on board, to allow it space to bounce back and to tread on a different path of ecologically balanced growth - before we hit the thresholds of climate irreversibility.

The politics of climate change, played out in these hallowed halls, unfortunately remains totally out of sync with the scientific evidence *and* the physical reality of climate change. If this continues, all of us may be soon destined to the dustbins of history – a history of self inflicted destruction.

Our youth is out on the streets and sees the urgency and emergency, our scientists not only see it but have already predicted the abyss facing us and our economies are already draining under the burden of forced adaptation costs.

So **Madam President**, let us negotiate *to act* and *not to further delay* action.

Within the comity of nations, Pakistan solidly supports the Paris Consensus and at same time it faces a climate challenge which is not only unique but equally inescapable. We contribute less than 1% of the global greenhouse gas emissions but yet, every year, we keep on climbing up the ladder of climate vulnerability. The long term German Watch index, places Pakistan at 5th position in terms of climate vulnerability and 3rd in terms of the economic costs borne over this period – estimated at \$3.2 bn. Within this ranking, we also join a small and unique group of countries which is, consistently and simultaneously, appearing on *not only* the yearly but also the long term climate vulnerability index.

This, **Madam President**, is not an enviable position to be in, and certainly not a position of our own making nor of our own choosing,

as it places Pakistan squarely on the front lines of an unfolding disaster.

Climate change, as viewed from Pakistan's lens, may well be the biggest human rights violation of history where the lives and livelihoods of billions of people has been put at risk – *all due to* the unbridled pollution and uncontrolled excesses of a few.

Pakistan does not have an option to escape climate change and its impacts. The forced climate adaptation needs remain at between \$7 to \$14 billion per annum, thus making climate compatible development an inevitable direction to take and building resilience of our vulnerable communities as well as our infrastructure, an undeniable option

While facing this daunting challenge, Pakistan remains *equally committed to raising its ambition for climate action* and lead the response in shaping a new future. A future at balance and harmony with nature and a future which can further the dreams of our youth and avoid hopelessly crushing them at the altar of an impending climate catastrophe,

Madam President - this future *is* possible.

We, in Pakistan, have chosen to position ourselves to tread on a sustainable development pathway, in line with the spirit of the Paris Agreement. A paradigm shift in our business as usual is at play which involves enormous political and economic cost.

Led by our Prime Minister Imran Khan's green vision and backed with concerted action, Pakistan has been making a shift towards a "clean and green" Pakistan.

We shifted away from having the highest deforestation rate in Asia, by successfully planting a billion trees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 4 years and increasing the provincial forest cover by 6.3%. We have now raised the bar by initiating the 10 billion tree tsunami - across the whole country. This project is helping us to generate thousands of green jobs, revive the forest biodiversity, engage the indigenous communities and energize our youth to become custodians of a green future for our nation.

Secondly, we have decided to shift away from polluting transport by framing our first electric vehicle policy which is now targeting a 30% shift to electric by 2030. Earlier this month, the city of Karachi in Pakistan launched the world's first "zero emissions" metro line – which incidentally is also the first transport project to be financed under the Green Climate fund.

Thirdly, a “Clean-Green cities index” has been initiated in 20 cities to *trigger a shift* towards improved waste management and sanitation. Concurrently, Pakistan has decided to get out of its plastic addiction by banning the single use plastic bags – which is now being enforced across the country.

Fourthly, our “Recharge Pakistan” initiative is *focused on shifting* our direction by effectively managing and prudently utilizing our water resources – turning catastrophic floods into an opportunity for recharging aquifers and naturally restoring ecosystems. This is an innovative initiative and an eco-system-based adaptation to climate change.

Concurrently, to fulfil our growing energy needs, we are making a purposeful transition towards renewable energy by harnessing the untapped potential of wind, solar and hydro in Pakistan and are targeting a huge 60% shift towards clean “carbon free” energy by 2030.

In compliance with its responsibilities, Pakistan’s second national communications was recently submitted, the national committee on carbon markets has been set up to explore market based instruments and our NDC is being updated into an “enhanced

NDC” to incorporate all the country-financed activities *practically underway* in Pakistan and reflected in our 5 point environmental agenda.

Also, Pakistan is now launching the “Eco-System Restoration Fund” as an *independent, transparent and comprehensive financial mechanism which shall* facilitate Pakistan’s transition towards climate compatible development through targeted initiatives on afforestation, biodiversity conservation and ecological restoration. All using nature based solutions to address nature based challenges. This platform will allow partners to share with Pakistan the dream of a better, low carbon and ecologically balanced future.

Finally, Madam President

While countries like Pakistan are willing to think out of the box as well as act out of the box, we urge that raising ambition is essentially seen in the context of specific national circumstances and development imperatives of developing countries as well as the unfulfilled commitments with regard to mitigation, technology transfer and provision of climate finance, all of which *need to be met urgently and to be scaled up significantly.*

Pakistan remains committed and ready to play its part in what has to be a coordinated effort based on a relationship of trust and a partnership with nature.

We have to ACT NOW because Madam President our collective INACTION will neither be forgiven nor forgotten.

I thank you.