



## PRESS RELEASE

PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN JOINT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

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### **Zubair Motiwala Chairman PAJCCI entrusted to help improve business transactions and revive economic deliberations across the border**

Debilitating economic momentum and increasing trust deficit aggravated by the intervention of other international players in Afghanistan have been significantly affecting the long-term socioeconomic linkages between the two neighboring countries in the last couple of years.

The recent dilemma of the delayed release of more than 2000 empty containers and trucks added fuel to the fire. In this regard, Chairman PAJCCI's letter to H.E. Ashraf Ghani, President Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, received overwhelming response and immediate intervention was initiated at the Afghan side. To complement the efforts at Pakistan side, Zubair Motiwala led a delegation comprising private stakeholders from both the sides and visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce this week. During the meeting with H.E. Mr. Razak Dawood, Adviser to Prime Minister for Commerce, Textile, Industry, Production and Investment, Motiwala highlighted the urgent need of resolving the issue at the Torkham border, which is not only increasing the cost of doing business but is also repelling the most lucrative business transactions. He highlighted that Afghanistan is only country with which Pakistan enjoys a trade surplus and at this point of grave economic crises, the lost business with Afghanistan can bring fruitful results. He iterated that actual trade quantum is \$5 billion, with a potential to reach \$10 billion, but due to negligence and trust deficit it is stuck at \$1.7 billion. He urged the Minister to also consider the pending items that have been the irritants, referring to approved 49 points between the then Finance Ministers of Afghanistan and Pakistan when H.E. Ashraf Ghani visited Pakistan with positive sentiments and keenness to strengthen socioeconomic linkages. He emphasized that the delay caused from our side at that time led to the lost confidence and caused jeopardy which needs immediate attention.

Faiz Muhammad, Former VP PAJCCI, specified that the stranded containers were more than 7000 in December out of which mostly re-routed through Iran causing immense business loss, yet more than 2000 trucks / containers are awaiting their fate. Secretary General PAJCCI, Faiza Zubair, requested a waiver or relaxation in terms of detention charges for these trucks and containers as this issue is not under their control. She also highlighted the dire need of infrastructure development at both Torkham and Chaman border for timely release.

Ahmad Shah, Director PAJCCI – Afghanistan, ensured commitment of his side to clear 400-500 trucks per day provided the process is expedited at Pakistan side. He mentioned that in lieu of letter by Chairman PAJCCI to H.E. President of Afghanistan, an immediate delegation was sent to the border for identifying the hurdles and an instruction was issued for immediate resolution of the same. He requested the Government of Pakistan to increase border time, at least for clearance of these containers and assured support from their side of the border.

Acknowledging the dire need of an immediate solution to matters in hand, Razak Dawood, ensured his commitment on behalf of the Government. In order to expedite the process, he entrusted Chairman PAJCCI to take the initiative of visiting H.E. Ashraf Ghani and deliberate on economic matters of significant importance, for paving the way forward on behalf of the Government. He also sought report from PAJCCI on pending issues and instructed DG Transit Trade to immediately look into and rectify the Torkham matter at the earliest. The Minister also inducted Motiwala in the committees of Tariff Rationalization and Textile Reforms.

Junaid Makda, Former President PAJCCI, reiterated the need of close coordination by Ministry of Foreign Affairs with private stakeholders for effective policy advocacy. He felt that the lack of engagement has resulted in short-sighted tactics and inclusion of right parties would facilitate Government and ministry in outlining the effective action plan, policies and strategies. Makda was highly acknowledged by Razak Dawood on his report highlighting lacunas associated with Trade Organization Act and Rules that is impacting the proficiency of Chambers in Pakistan. Minister instructed to conduct an immediate meeting with DGTO in line with the proposal presented in the submitted report.

Chairman PAJCCI strongly urged both the governments to segregate business and trade ties from political tensions, and has sought an immediate appointment with H.E. President of Afghanistan to revive the momentum and help establish confidence across the border.

