



## PRESS RELEASE

PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN JOINT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

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### **Director Transit took immediate notice of clearance of perishable items and re-routing of empty containers on PAJCCI's insistence**

“Pakistan and Afghanistan are brothers. We both share the same religion, culture and interest”, Co-Chairman PAJCCI, Mr. Khan Jan Alokozai opened dialogue at Torkham Meeting held in Custom Office Torkham Border. He appreciated GoP for facilitating Afghan Delegation and showing keen interest in resolving the issues in hand.

Alokozai added that in the past 20 years, the diplomatic relation between two countries hadn't been good. The corrupt government had increased the gap between businessmen across borders. Now, in the new administration, Pakistan has an advantage to come forward and resolve problems aggressively to strengthen ties. He iterated that Pakistan should study and adopt trade policies of Uzbekistan and Iran with Afghanistan, which can be helpful and effective for Pakistan to smooth trade. He suggested that just like these two countries, we should also have 20 member committee at border, including PAJCCI directors from both the sides representing the business community, custom officials, border officials, commercial consulates and relevant officials, which can help facilitate immediate resolution or clarification of the matters arising real-time. He said that a specific card be issued to the representatives of business members in this committee so that they can navigate in the border areas till specific points and engage in resolution of routine issues. He specified that by dividing the load across several borders (Ghulam Khan, Angoor Ada, Kharlachi), Torkham congestion can be controlled.

Alokozai raised issues pertinent to internet connectivity at Ghulam Khan, lack of flour and cooking oil in Afghanistan having devastating effects, ease of travel, especially for pedestrians and traders, illegal extortion at Pakistan side and scanning issues by NLC at the borders. He requested to allow shifting load of empty containers from Torkham to other border crossing areas.

Co-Chairman PAJCCI thanked GoP for ensuring visa on arrival for Afghanistan and added that it will significantly support the ties with Pakistan.

Zia Sarhadi, VP PAJCCI requested that NLC be regulated as their increasing prices are affecting the cost of doing business, he mentioned that they have increased charges without prior intimation and their scanners are ineffective causing congestion.

Director Transit Trade Karachi, Habib Ahmed, while chairing the session said that Custom is fully aware of the problems occurring at borders and under the leadership of DG Transit Imtiaz Shaikh, immediate resolutions are brought in place. Specially taking on the point of food crisis, he said that we have released WFO containers to Afghanistan postponed the major requirement of submitting NOC (maafinama). He elaborated that DG has taken important notes in the last meeting of PAJCCI and already major steps are in progress in order to facilitate the process. At the Karachi port, it was taking 13 days for clearance and 100% goods were being manually assessed, but now, it will be done on automated system which will eliminate the need of manual appraisalment. Insurance guarantee is no more required for every consignment coming from Afghanistan, rather revolving guarantees are in place. 5% examination has been eliminated only 20% scanning is done and examination will be done on ambiguous consignments only. He acknowledged that perishable items must be given priority and the clearance of empty containers must be done on an immediate basis to resolve congestion. He stated that they would brainstorm on the idea generated in this meeting for routing at least empty containers from Afghanistan through other border crossings and to check on the timing of clearance at Torkham they will initiate monitoring from immediate basis.

Adding to the conversation, Habib Ahmed said that new steps are being taken by FBR to form air- road corridors realizing the opportunity. He acknowledged the suggestion of forming a committee at the border and assured that his team will study the procedure of Iran and Uzbekistan in this regard.

Pakistan side requested Alokozai to facilitate their accession to CIS countries safely via Afghan corridor, facilitate APTTA finalization and coordinate with their ministries for resolving issues of increasing tariffs at the Afghan side on Pakistani goods. They also requested for safe corridor for Pakistani businesses and provide avenues for more trade. Co-Chairman, mentioned that the new government in Afghanistan formulated a high economic council involving 3 businessmen, including himself, to conduct weekly meetings to resolve technical issues impacting trade and transit. He suggested that Pakistan should also form such a committee and include PAJCCI from this side. He added that the new Government has specifically ensured severe penalties on extortion and violation of rules and the same be adopted at the Pakistan side. He assured his staunch support in resolving the matters at his side and assured that facilitation to CARs is Pakistan's right and he will deliberate the matter.

Chairman PAJCCI Zubair Motiwala applauded the Government of Pakistan's decision to allow all Afghan students with valid admissions and study visas in Pakistan to travel via Torkham and resume their academics; he stated that it was a great takeaway by the Afghan delegation who departed yesterday after its visit to Pakistan on October 5. He further established that as a follow-up meeting the delegation will be visiting in November and during the time Pakistan side will strive for resolution of all matters deliberated. He further urged both the Governments to revisit APTTA by engaging business communities from the

sides and finalize the draft proposal pending since long, as this is the right time for rebuilding ties and take joint corrective measures for enhancing socio-economic relationship which would significantly facilitate Pakistan's access to CARs also.

Motiwala reiterated the request from Government of Pakistan to facilitate businesses at this fragile time by extending the deadlines of PSW application and payments in dollars till appropriate infrastructure is resumed in Afghanistan, else it would aggravate humanitarian crisis severely in Afghanistan which is depending on Pakistan significantly. He stated that PAJCCI has issued several letters and have deliberated as well, and October 15 deadline should be extended on immediate basis.

The meeting was attended by private sector from both sides, custom and NLC officials. The Afghan business delegation departed safely upon conclusion of the meeting.

