

**Welcome Speech of Dr. Fehmida Mirza  
Speaker, National Assembly of Pakistan**

**Bismillah irr Rehman Irr Raheem**

**Excellency Smt. Meira Kumar,**

**Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Republic of India ---- my most distinguished guest tonight!**

**Janab Manoj Kumar Sahib**

**Members of the Parliaments from India and Pakistan!**

**Ministers, Excellencies, Media persons, Ladies and Gentlemen!**

**Assalam-o-Alikum and Good Evening to all of you!**

**It is with immense pleasure that I welcome my friend; a woman of real substance, Smt. Meira Kumar, the worthy Speaker of the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha of the Republic of India, and her entire delegation on their first-ever official bilateral visit to Pakistan on my invitation.**

**Excellency!**

**The flight that took you from New Delhi to Islamabad was little over sixty minutes but it in fact travelled over sixty years of our common past as two independent neighbours.**

**This past is a unique blend of personal affinities and state acrimonies; of common heritage, shared values and same language and yet marred by missed chances and lost opportunities.**

**It's time to make-up for the past. It's time to give people what they have always wanted ---- a mutually respected, peaceful and friendly neighbourhood.**

**So as I welcome you in Islamabad, I earnestly hope that your visit also enables both of us to build a bridge of a democratic relationship of trust and confidence.**

**Excellency! Jointly our two Parliaments represent a quarter of the entire world's population.**

**These Chambers speak for our people who are united in their firm belief in freedom, social justice and democracy.**

**Above all, our two legislatures have also collectively written history by electing for the first time women as their presiding officers.**

**This trust of our respective Houses is in fact a tribute to the woman of the Indo-Pak Sub-continent --- for all her sacrifices --- for all her strengths.**

**Women don't make wars; women make peace.**

**Women don't take life; women give life.**

**It was in this spirit, Excellency! that I decided to travel to Delhi at the midst of a tense atmosphere in January 2010. I did so since in parliamentary diplomacy, I found a hope for a way out. And yes we succeeded. My proposal for reviving the Pak-India Parliamentary Friendship Group instantly met with your approval and new vistas of dialogue opened between us.**

**During the last two years, the world community also witnessed a pleasant change as we both supported each other on numerous international parliamentary and other forums.**

**I am glad to observe that in our every successive meeting, held anywhere in the world, we have made progress. In your absorbing personality, I've always found warmth and through your velvet voice, an honest desire for friendship has remained clearly evident. Your visit today is thus is also a befitting proof of the ever-growing bond between the two of us.**

**Earlier this evening, during our formal and informal talks, we covered a wide range of subjects and identified numerous possible areas of cooperation.**

**We noted with satisfaction that the Parliamentary Friendship Groups in our respective parliaments have been established and so we moved on to the next stage of making them fully effective and task-oriented.**

**I am sure that this process will yield positive results by not only breaking the existing mist but also in finding practical ways to solve the contentious issues, affecting the healthy growth of our mutual relationship.**

**At the same time, I also hope that such sustained parliamentary contacts will help us in attaining an accelerated pace of bilateral trade, cultural and youth exchange as well as sharing our mutual parliamentary experiences.**

**So, tonight, I invite you to join me in launching a “parliamentary drive” to give new meaning, dimensions and future to the Indo-Pak relations. Our steadfastness and determination in this drive will define our success.**

**If we succeed in this drive, we will actually succeed in developing a new political culture in the Indo-Pak Sub Continent:**

**A culture of solving the issues and not shying away from them;**

**A culture of dialogue and understanding and not confrontation and conflict.**

**Excellency!**

**The word “culture” reminds me that Indo-Pak Subcontinent has the distinct pride of producing world’s most enchanting traditions of inter-faith, inter-communal and inter-racial harmony. The sufis, sages, sanths and saints taught love and tolerance through a unique collage of dance, music, poetry and songs, which was spread across continents through the magic of our most treasured artistes.**

**The performance tonight will enable you to recognise and recall some of these greatest voices of our region, which are truly our common heritage.**

**This night, as we break bread together as sister's friends, neighbours and democratic leaders, let us add our voices too to this joint tradition of love, peace and respect.**

**I thank you and wish you a pleasant and comfortable stay in Pakistan.**

**Thank you very much.**

**Pakistan Zindabad**

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And as I've already concluded my formal speech, let me add a footnote to it.

محترمہ سپیکر صاحبہ

آج کی شام ہمارے دو طرفہ مذاکرات میں ہم نے آپ سے انتہائی شستہ اردو سنی جو مسلسل کانوں میں رس گھولتی رہی۔

بات سے بات چلانے اور لفظ سے لفظ ملانے کے باب میں آپ نے جاں نثار اختر کے شعر کو ذریعہ اظہار بنایا سو میں دوستی کے باب میں احمد فراز کے لفظ دھراتی ہوں۔

نہ تکلف، نہ احتیاط، نہ زعم  
دوستی کی زبان سادہ ہے