**Ambassador Khalil Hashmi’s video remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the 4th China-Pakistan Tropical Arid Non-Wood Forest Science and Technology Event**

(Zhengzhou: 03 December 2024)

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Academicians,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is both a pleasure and a privilege to address the opening of the 4th China-Pakistan Tropical Arid Non-Wood Forest Science and Technology Event. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the China Society of Forestry, Henan Academy of Science, and the Central South University of Forestry and Technology for organizing this important gathering.

This event marks yet another significant milestone in the ongoing collaboration between Pakistan and China in the field of non-wood forest resources. The three earlier rounds have provided invaluable opportunities for the exchange of ideas, research findings, and best practices between our two countries, strengthening the bonds of friendship and cooperation.

My special appreciation to Mr. Zhang Baozhong for steering this effort. I recall my virtual participation in the last year’s forum as well on his invitation. I was also pleased to meet and interact with him last month in Zhengzhou, where we exchanged views on harnessing the potential of agriculture for socio-economic uplift of rural communities in Pakistan.

**Distinguished Guests**,

Pakistan has made significant strides in the field of non-wood and economic forests in recent years, particularly in the tropical arid regions.

Forest sector has increasingly become a priority for Pakistan’s sustainable development, especially given the challenges posed by climate change and desertification.

Pakistan is rich in diverse flora, and we have been investing heavily in the conservation and sustainable utilization of non-wood forest resources, such as medicinal plants, gums, resins, and fruit-bearing trees. These resources contribute to our biodiversity and play an essential role in the livelihoods of our rural populations.

We have seen remarkable progress in the commercialization of non-wood forest products as well, which are increasingly seen as key to strengthening Pakistan’s rural economy and achievement of our sustainability goals.

Our collaboration with Chinese institutions in areas such as research on forest management, agroforestry systems, and climate-resilient species has proven to be mutually beneficial, and I believe we are just scratching the surface of what can be achieved together.

**Distinguished Guests,**

Looking forward, Pakistan and China share immense potential for growth in this sector. There are four areas where our collaboration can thrive:

* First in the field of Technology Transfer and Capacity Building where exchange of expertise and cutting-edge research in areas such as forest biotechnology, non-wood forest product processing, and sustainable forest management will help both countries harness the full potential of this sector.
* Secondly, our Joint Research and Innovation: With China’s leadership in scientific research and technological innovation, and trapping into Pakistan’s rich ecological diversity, we can jointly develop climate-resilient species, drought-resistant plants, and advanced irrigation technologies for arid and semi-arid regions.
* Thirdly, Public-Private Partnerships: Engaging both government and private sector stakeholders will ensure that non-wood forest industries can be developed into sustainable economic enterprises, benefiting local communities and contributing to national economies.
* Fourthly, Climate Change Mitigation: Together, we can lead the way in utilizing non-wood forest resources for carbon sequestration and eco-restoration efforts, which are essential to combating climate change and preserving global biodiversity.

**Distinguished Guests,**

In conclusion, the potential for collaboration between our two nations in the field of tropical arid non-wood forests is immense, and this event provides an ideal platform to further deepen our partnership to fully leverage the opportunities.

I am confident that the discussions, research presentations, and exchanges over the coming days will further strengthen the ties between China and Pakistan in this vital field.

Let us continue to work together for a greener, more sustainable future, where the invaluable resources of our forests are preserved, utilized, and shared for the benefit of our people and the world at large.

I thank you.