

PRESS RELEASE

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Bhutto Calls for New Paradigm for South Asia

Urges Signing of CTBT and Creation of Asian Free Trade Zone

ISLAMABAD -- Benazir Bhutto, Leader of the Opposition and Chair, Pakistan People's Party, in a speech to the first Indo-Pak Parliamentarians Conference, held Saturday in Islamabad, called on both Pakistan and India to sign the CTBT, and proposed the creation of an "Asian Free Zone" including Pakistan, India, China, Iran, Central Asia and the other SAARC nations.

NUCLEAR ISSUE

On the nuclear crisis, Ms. Bhutto during her speech called for:

Adherence quickly to the CTBT Treaty;

A moratorium on fissile material production;

Resisting the development, flight-testing and storage of ballistic weapons;

Strengthening export controls on nuclear technology

In her speech, Ms. Bhutto said that "Both our nations must step forward, understand the threat to our people, our region, and the entire world, and declare South Asia a nuclear free and missile free zone."

ASIA FREE TRADE ZONE

As a central component of her speech to the historic conference, Ms. Bhutto called for a new Asian Free Zone. Outlining the world's largest free economic zone, Ms. Bhutto called for a creation of free trade throughout the region, a common Central Bank with a common trading currency, a common security policy and lastly a common revolving presidency and parliament.

During the first phase, Ms. Bhutto proposed starting with the SAARC nations (Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, the Maldives and Sri Lanka), with perhaps inclusion of Iran.

In the second phase, within a decade, Ms. Bhutto proposed moving toward inclusion of Afghanistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and finally, China, to allow for integration of China's unique economic system.

"This is a vision of an Asian Free Zone that by 2010 can be in existence with 2.5 to 3 billion people and with a GNP of \$7 trillion (based upon 1988 purchasing power parity)" she said. "Our Asian Free Zone could then be at the same level, in GNP terms, as the EC, US or Japan.

"Our nations are faced with the choice: either continue as warring sovereign states who continue to carry the 'Third World' label for the next 100 years, or pool our resources to create an Asian economic powerhouse comparable to the EC", Ms. Bhutto concluded to the delegates.

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