President Asif Ali Zardari today called upon the U.S. to assist Pakistan in civilian nuclear technology to help the country overcome its energy crisis, on the one hand, and bridge the trust deficit between the two countries on the other. This he said during a meeting with Director of US National Intelligence Mr. Dennis C. Blair who called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr today. Mr. Neil H. Joock, National Intelligence Officer for South Asia National Intelligence Council, US Ambassador Ms. Anne W. Patterson and Mr. Jonathan D. Bank, Regional Affairs Counselor, were also present during the meeting. The Pakistani side included Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Interior Minister Mr. Rehman A. Malik, Director-General Inter-Services Intelligence Lieutenant General Ahmad Shuja Pasha, Secretary General to the President Mr. Salman Faruqui, Senator Sughra Imam and senior officials.

Briefing the media Spokesperson to the President former Senator Farhatullah Babar said that the President said that provision of civilian nuclear technology would go a long way in addressing misperception about the U.S. in Pakistan.

The President also called upon the US administration for early transfer of drone technology to Pakistan for its effective use by our own security forces and for its wider public acceptability. US drone attacks on our soils, the President said, not only infringe upon Pak sovereignty but also undermine the national consensus against the war on militancy, Mr. Babar informed. The President also expressed reservations over the new screening regime for Pakistani nationals and called for its review as it had created resentment in the country and led to doubts and misgivings among the people of Pakistan.

The President emphasized the need to expedite ROZ legislation in order to give local people hope for the better through creation of job and other economic opportunities. We need to create opportunities for the people to prevent them falling in trap of the militants, the President stressed. He said that Pakistan has suffered a huge loss of over 35 billion dollars during the last eight years as a result of the fight against militancy in addition to the colossal and unquantifiable cost in terms of social and human losses, but with our limited resources our security forces have achieved remarkable success against militants, the President remarked.

Mr. Babar said that the President stressed upon the need for working on counter-terrorism strategy within the agreed parameters and creating an effective intelligence sharing mechanism between the two countries. The President, during the meeting, also called upon the US to strengthen and enhance counter terrorism capabilities of the Pak security apparatus through provision of timely assistance and necessary tools and equipment.

Discussing the regional situation, the President said that Pakistan has legitimate interests in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan and welcomes international assistance for this cause.

Mr. Dennis Blair appreciated the Pakistan Government and its security forces for their struggle against militancy and reiterated the US administration commitment to work closely with the Government of Pakistan in this regard.