SPEECH OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER AT INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON INDIAN MILITARY’s COLD START DOCTRINE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGIC STABILITY OF SOUTH ASIA, ORGANIZE BY SASSI, 21 JULY, 2010.

Ms. Maria Sultan,
Director General, SASSI

Excellencies, Distinguished guests,
Ladies & Gentlemen,

Assalam-o-Alaikum.

I am thankful to SASSI for organizing this event and for providing me an opportunity to speak to such an august gathering of scholars.

In a democratic polity like ours, foreign policy reflects hopes and aspirations of the people of the country. Think tanks like SASSI, intellectuals and civil society organizations have an important role to play in informing, shaping and articulating public opinion on important foreign policy and security issues.

The subject chosen by SASSI for this workshop – Indian Military’s Cold Start Doctrine and its Implications for Strategic Stability in South Asia – is both ironic and provocative. It is ironic as only last week I hosted His Excellency S.M. Krishan, Foreign Minister of India in Islamabad as part of our efforts to recommence stalled dialogue in pursuit of our endeavours for durable peace in the region, albeit without a corresponding positive response.

It is provocative as it reminds us about prevailing realities in South Asia and transcends from our ideals of peace and amity, preached by sufis/saints in this land, and ventures into scenarios of war and destruction so often predicted by prophets of doom and destruction.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Pakistan remains firmly committed to the objective of peace and stability in South Asia. Our strong commitment to peace and security stems from our conviction that a peaceful and secure environment, regionally as well as globally, is imperative for eradicating poverty; and to ensure sustained economic growth, prosperity and welfare of our people as well as other countries in the region.

It goes without saying that neither peace nor stability could be achieved in isolation. They need strong partnerships, and willingness to build bridges and to walk the talk on the high road to peace and equal security for all the partners. Naturally, this process of mutually enriching partnerships begins with your neighbours.

Fully cognizant of this reality, Pakistan has been pursuing a three pronged approach with India, to achieve durable peace and strategic stability in South Asia. This includes: (a) peaceful resolution of all outstanding disputes, including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir; (b) strategic restraint and conventional balance; and (c) close cooperation for the socio-economic development and welfare of our peoples.

As you are, well aware, between 1974 and 1998, Pakistan made several proposals to keep our region free from nuclear weapons. We regularly co-sponsored UN General Assembly resolution to declare South Asia as a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. This could not be achieved due to non-cooperation on the part of our neighbour.

As a consequence, we were forced to respond to Indian nuclear tests; which were followed by highly provocative statements by senior political leaders in May 1998.

Our response was not motivated by any ambition for regional dominance or great power status. It was aimed at restoring strategic balance and to deter aggression against our political independence and territorial integrity.

We believe that growing conventional asymmetry between Pakistan and India would seriously undermine the objective of strategic stability in the region. Pakistan, therefore, would continue to pursue various initiatives with India to: (a) strengthen strategic stability, (b) avoid arms race, and (c) prevent conflict in South Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As recognized in the Joint Statement issued after the first Pakistan-India Expert Level talks on Nuclear Confidence Building Measures in New Delhi on 20 June 2004, the nuclear capabilities of the two countries constitute a factor of stability in the region. As mature and responsible nuclear powers, both countries now need to develop a better appreciation of each others threat perceptions and military doctrines. It would help in developing doctrines and strategies that are defensive, rather than aggressive in nature. It is particularly desirable as any sort of military adventurism in South Asia, is neither prudent nor responsible. It has the potential to plunge the whole region into disastrous consequences of unmeasurable proportions.
In this back-drop, floating of concepts like Cold Start doctrine betray strong streak of recklessness. It is hard to imagine that any rational mind could come up with such dangerous ideas. The deterrence theory has withstood intense rivalry between two super-powers throughout the cold war period. One wonders if anyone was now willing to undertake an adventure beyond deterrence.

As the world moves from cold war bitterness to cooperation in diverse fields, do we want South Asia to descend into a new destructive madness? We are not interested in any such venture. I strongly feel that the interest of regional and indeed global peace, no one should be allowed to pursue such irrational adventurism.

Let me also make it absolutely clear, while Pakistan stands for peace in the region and beyond, we cannot remain oblivious to threats to our national security. Pakistan has the capability and the determination to counter any military adventurism thrust upon us. Our response would be swift and effective. No one should nurture any doubt on this score.

However, I am confident that the Indian political leadership, civil society activists and intellectual elite would discourage any moves or doctrines which have the potential to endanger peace and stability of the entire South Asian region.

In the past Pakistan and India have agreed on several nuclear and conventional Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). These measures were in the nature of risk reduction measures. We believe that the two sides should now go beyond risk reduction measures and work towards measures aimed at restraint and avoidance of an arms race in the region. The Lahore agreement of 1999 provides the suitable framework to pursue broader CBMs in nuclear and conventional fields, as well as to engage in bilateral consultations on security concepts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Pakistan is a peace loving country. We wish to develop friendly and cooperative relations with all the neighbouring countries including India. I conveyed this message to my Indian counterpart during his visit to Islamabad last week. I assured him that Pakistan was willing to walk the proverbial extra-mile with India in pursuit of peace, welfare and prosperity of our two peoples. For this, the two countries need to return to the negotiating table with the political will to resolve all our outstanding disputes, including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir peacefully and in accordance with international law and morality.

The Indian side was more focused on Mumbai blasts. I emphasized that terrorism was a common threat. Pakistani nation has been living through many Mumbai’s every day. More than 10,000 innocent civilians have fallen victim to terrorism over the past few years. Our material losses exceed US$ 40 billion. Despite all odds, we remain determined to bring to justice anyone and every one involved in heinous terrorist incidents any where in the world.

Pakistan has been in the forefront of struggle against terrorism. The recent successes achieved by our security forces against terrorists in Swat and other areas of Pakhtoonkhwa and FATA have been lauded by the international community. These successes have come at a heavy cost. More than 2500 personnel of the security forces have offered the ultimate sacrifice. We have offered more sacrifices than any other country in the world. Our actions against terrorists speak louder than words.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

South Asia has seen plenty of conflict, warfare and bloodshed in the past 60 years. The 21st century has brought new challenges for the entire human race. Climate change is increasingly being compared with Weapons of Mass Destrucions (WMDs) for its destructive potential. It poses particularly serious challenge to South Asia. We all depend on Himalayan glaciers for our fresh water supplies. An increase of more than two degree centigrade in global temperature may cause sudden melting of all glaciers leading to floods followed by droughts.

Climate change and other issues like poverty eradication, malnutrition and high infant mortality call for closer cooperation among regional counties to evolve joint responses to common challenges. The welfare and prosperity of our people will depend upon how well we can cope with emerging new challenges.

In conclusion let me reiterate that Pakistan and India should work together to institute a sustained dialogue for peace, stability and prosperity in South Asia. We should not remain hostage to our troubled past. We must rise to the occasion and take bold decisions to lead our people to a more hopeful and promising future.

Thank you.