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Institute for a Community  
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## Ambassador Hamad Al-Zaabi's Diplomatic Legacy in UAE–Pakistan Relations



By Mr. Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director,  
Pakistan Research Center for a Community with  
Shared Future (PRCCSF), Islamabad

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H.E. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Pakistan since September 19, 2017, has played a transformational role in reinforcing and expanding the historic and brotherly relationship between the UAE and Pakistan. His tenure has been marked by visionary



leadership, robust diplomacy, and unwavering commitment to shared progress, peace, and prosperity between the two countries. As one of the most proactive diplomats, Ambassador Al-Zaabi has elevated the UAE-Pakistan partnership to a high level across multiple sectors, including trade, economy, cultural exchange, technology, education, and defense.

### **A Champion of Deepening Bilateral Ties and Economic Integration**

Ambassador Al-Zaabi has served as a catalyst for fostering strong political, diplomatic, and people-to-people connections between the UAE and Pakistan with his vision of dynamic and people-centered diplomacy, which has promoted bilateral cooperation rooted in shared values, mutual respect, and a collective aspiration for regional peace and development, reaffirming the UAE's unwavering commitment to Pakistan's development, stability, and prosperity.

A landmark achievement under Ambassador Al-Zaabi's leadership was the successful negotiation of a Visa Waiver Agreement for diplomatic and special passport holders, enhancing diplomatic interaction and official exchanges between the two countries.

Furthermore, he played an instrumental role in reviving the 12th Pakistan-UAE Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC), scheduled for October 2024 in Abu Dhabi after a 13-year hiatus. The JMC focuses on formalizing



cooperation in existing sectors and exploring new avenues for mutually beneficial investment, demonstrating a renewed strategic thrust in bilateral engagements.

High-level regular meetings or interactions with Pakistani leadership, including the Prime Minister, federal ministers, and senior officials, have further deepened institutional ties and provided platforms to discuss areas such as commerce, health, maritime affairs, interior, and culture.

Under Ambassador Al-Zaabi's stewardship, UAE-Pakistan economic relations have scaled new heights, with one of his most remarkable achievements being the facilitation of bilateral trade that now exceeds \$10 billion, making the UAE Pakistan's third-largest trading partner after China and the United States. The UAE has emerged as a vital economic ally, investing heavily in Pakistan's energy, infrastructure, technology, and agriculture sectors. These investments have not only fueled economic growth but also generated employment and



enhanced Pakistan's export potential. Moreover, the UAE remains Pakistan's second-largest source of remittances, with over \$6.7 billion sent by more than a million Pakistani expatriates living and working in the Emirates.

### **Defense and Security Cooperation**

In addition to economic and diplomatic achievements, Ambassador Al-Zaabi has also been vital in promoting defense and security cooperation. The armed forces of both countries conduct regular joint military exercises, share intelligence, and collaborate on counterterrorism strategies. Pakistani military institutions are renowned for their professionalism, and many UAE officers receive training there, reflecting the depth of mutual trust in the defense domain. The UAE has consistently supported Pakistan on regional and international forums, and also the vital role played in constructive diplomacy played a role in de-escalating conflicts in South Asia.

Ambassador Al-Zaabi has supported initiatives aimed at enhancing cooperation in the fields of information technology, AI, digital finance, and blockchain. Both countries are heading towards digital transformation, and the Ambassador has facilitated dialogue between tech firms, startups, and government agencies to capitalize on emerging opportunities, with an emphasis on digital connectivity that also aligns with the broader vision of UAE's leadership in transforming its economy into a knowledge-based hub. Pakistan, with its youth-driven IT talent pool, stands to benefit immensely from this synergy.

## **Promoting Socio-Cultural and Educational Bonds**

Cultural diplomacy has remained a priority in Al-Zaabi's outreach efforts. Recognizing the importance of people-to-people ties, he has spearheaded initiatives aimed at enhancing academic cooperation, student exchange programs, and cultural exchanges. A recent Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two countries focuses on expanding collaboration in culture and education, fostering mutual understanding and shared learning.



Ambassador Al-Zaabi frequently visits Pakistani educational institutions, engaging with students and faculty to build academic bridges and inspire our youth. The UAE has consistently supported Pakistan through humanitarian aid and development projects, especially during times of natural disasters. Ambassador Al-Zaabi has actively facilitated UAE-funded relief initiatives aimed at improving health, housing, and education in underserved regions of Pakistan. The UAE's commitment to Pakistan's social welfare is not transactional but deeply humanitarian, highlighting the country's role as a genuine development partner. From rebuilding schools to setting up medical camps, UAE assistance continues to uplift lives across Pakistan.

In 2019, Ambassador Al-Zaabi had received the UAE Medal of Pride, one of the Emirates' highest civilian honors. In 2020, the Government of Pakistan awarded him the Hilal-e-Quaid-





e-Azam, a prestigious civilian award bestowed upon foreign dignitaries who have made significant contributions to Pakistan's progress and a testament to the ambassador's effective diplomacy and the deep affection with which he is regarded in both countries.

The Ambassador has also shown deep care and attention to the well-being of the Pakistani expatriate community in the UAE, which exceeds a million people. This community is a crucial bridge between the two nations. Their contributions in construction, healthcare, education, and business are widely acknowledged. Numerous Pakistani schools operate in the UAE, offering quality education and preserving cultural roots through regular interactions, policy facilitation, and cultural support. Ambassador Al-Zaabi has ensured that the Pakistani diaspora remains a vibrant contributor to both countries' success stories.

Ambassador Hamad Obaid Al-Zaabi's tenure in Pakistan will be remembered as a golden era of bilateral diplomacy. He has not only safeguarded the UAE's strategic interests but has also worked with compassion and sincerity to deepen the spirit of brotherhood between the peoples of the UAE and Pakistan. His work has been visionary, focused on long-term benefits, and reflective of the evolving dynamics of global diplomacy. As he continues to represent the UAE with distinction, Ambassador Al-Zaabi remains a symbol of trust, partnership, and shared dreams. His words resonate across both countries: "Our friendship will continue to grow stronger and endure for generations to come."