

## **International Conference – Inaugural Session Chairman's Welcome Address**

**Excellencies, Distinguished International and National Speakers, Valued Guests, Respectable Representatives of Media and Civil Society, Ladies and Gentlemen!**

I feel honoured in extending you a very warm welcome to this conference. I am confident that the time you will be spending at the conference over the next two days will result in useful outcomes.

Northern parts of Pakistan were hit by a severe earthquake in October 2005, over 73,338 people lost their lives and 128,304 were injured. Infrastructure like Road network, Educational and Health facilities, Government Buildings, water and sanitation facilities and Power and Telecommunication networks collapsed. Over 600,000 homes were destroyed in an area spanning 30,000 kilometers.

We were left with a reconstruction bill of US \$ 5 billion and 3.5 million people were rendered homeless.

Starting with relief and followed by early recovery programme, we have come a long way in the last 4 and half years. Life has come back to normal. Over 95 percent people have moved into newly built seismic resistant homes. New Educational and Health facilities are living examples of our policy of building back better.

Pakistan's approach to Reconstruction and Rehabilitation has been unique. We have a comprehensive programme covering 12 areas and 3 cross cutting themes. We feel that we have a lot to share with the world and learn from experts like you to further improve our programme.

In addition to 600,000 homes, we are working on 13,000 projects in different sectors. Over 80 percent of our projects have either been completed or are in different stages of construction. Rest of the projects will enter the construction stage by 30 June, 2010, with a target of completion by end of 2011.

Whatever we have done so far has been possible only through the generosity of international community in shape of funding and expertise, unflinching support of the Government of Pakistan and resilience of the affected people. We are grateful to all for their support in our hour of need.

Our programme ensures high levels of transparency and quality. We have a robust monitoring and evaluation system in place. Implementation is decentralized and stakeholder input is an important component of our strategy. We are quick to make mid course corrections, if required. Needless to say that all of these are basic requirements of any successful programme. We enjoy

remarkable donor confidence. This is evident from the fact that 98 percent of commitments have already been converted into reality.

Some of you will be traveling to the affected areas after the conference to see the actual situation on ground. I am confident that you will be pleased with the progress made so far.

I thank all the supporters for making it possible for us to share our humble experience with the rest of the world.

I once again thank you all for attending this important conference. I wish you a successful conference and a safe return to your homes.