The morning of 8th October started as any normal living but as we got closer to the time of the earthquake we were not aware of what was in store. A massive earthquake covering many parts of Pakistan, Azad Kashmir and Occupied Kashmir changed the lives of thousands of people. What was built in decades and generations was lost in seconds, and then started a journey by the whole world to assist people who went through this traumatic experience. We lost 73,000 lives, many more were injured and as a result of the earthquake we had thousands of orphans, paraplegics, amputees, quadriplegics and above all traumatized people who needed a lot of psychological and psychic care. In my thirty-six years of working experience and working life this was the toughest test of all the skills and all the capacity I had in conducting the affairs of whatever I was responsible. So, today, I would share with you very briefly what we did and focus merely on what were the lessons learnt.

When the earthquake happened, communications were disrupted, our supply lines were broken and it took a while for the whole system to realize the enormity of the task. However, we moved quickly and every stakeholder played a major role. We mobilized all assets of the state - the government, the people, the armed forces, the NGOs, civil society - and then gradually this became a global exercise. In this global exercise we learnt many things. But just to share with you what we did initially. One of the first things we did is mobilize our resources, the army was moved in as were other various entities of the state. Secondly, we created what is now called the ERC, the Earthquake Relief Commission, headed by General Farooq and here best decisions are taken without much thought. But the point is that what we had was an inadequate disaster management set up. We created this organization (ERC) overnight in the Prime Minister’s Office, staffed it with the best people we could find and moved on from there. This organization was the single window to coordinate the entire effort. We also recognized that at the same time, looking at the enormity of the task, we need to create another entity which will take it on the long term – reconstruction, rehabilitation, income generation etc. So, then we created ERRA, the Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority – totally separate. Now we are going to merge the two, because as the relief effort takes off, the reconstruction, rehabilitation effort is now getting into full gear. The President and I spent hours working on this and then getting it implemented so that we could come up with an effective mechanism. Now, we have decided to have a permanent Disaster Management Agency in Pakistan that will report to the Prime Minister. It will have a core group and if disaster happens in Pakistan or anywhere in the world, like you saw the alarm bells in Ankara, we will have a perspective and then we could dispatch people accordingly.

The key element in disaster management is to know whom to access and whom to tap, to know every paramedic in the country, every medical expert, every volunteer, and every trained civil defense worker. He and She can then be called at a moments notice through media or whatever means possible. We will have such a core group of people.

We also need a global effort to do this. One of the lessons we learnt is that at the global level too you need coordination. I must say, as I told the Secretary General when we saw him in New York, the UN family did a masterful, superb job but our experience in Pakistan also highlighted what more needs to be done at the global level. We have publicly supported the initiative of the UN that lets not go for flash appeals. We must empower the UN to have a disaster management fund, or whatever it is called, so that UN can act immediately. I think the world has to set up this fund and then rapidly respond. Then if a disaster is really of intensity or a magnitude where extraordinary fund raising is required, which we did in November in Islamabad, then that comes later. But for the first several weeks of a disaster, especially for the emergency relief there must be a fund available to be tapped. Disasters know no borders. It can strike any where, any time, anybody.
So, we need to do this universally, we also noticed another thing that sharing of best practices and disaster management is not yet globally institutionalized. There are pockets of excellence but it is not seamless and the world needs to develop that. We owe it to ourselves, to our children, and to our coming generations that we must develop a funding capability to react immediately. We must develop a disaster relief agency at the global level and certainly we (Pakistan) will have ours. Then of course, there has to be leadership and will to act at the local level. When we had the earthquake, in Pakistan we experienced a very unique, exciting and very satisfying phenomena, which was the galvanization of the whole nation. People came ahead, irrespective of political, ethnic, religious, and geographic divide. Our problem was how to manage the exuberance which was being displayed by the people of Pakistan. We debated this many times, should we stop the traffic because there were traffic jams to the earthquake areas. But we made a conscious decision that this euphoria, this spirit, this commitment if interrupted may disillusion people, so let’s build on it and use it as strength. The nation galvanized from Karachi to Khyber. We raised lots of money. There were volunteers, doctors, even people closed there businesses and went there. Amazing, I said to myself that I am proud to be a Pakistani because I saw a spirit in our country which, at least I had not seen in this intensity ever before. Now, when the event happened, we looked at the whole issue in three different ways, short term, medium term, and long term. On the first day of the earthquake we had 700 or 800 casualties already brought into the hospitals here. There was a whole focus on the medical care and evacuation because every hour, every second matters. Many people may have lost their lives because they did not get adequate medical care on day one. Then we had to move people from rubble to tents. The rubble to tent journey is a very traumatic journey. We had to immediately provide some kind of temporary shelters, food, mass kitchens and package food. It was a massive exercise in logistics, organization, and leadership. Once we focused on temporary shelter, food and medical care, we moved to the next phase where we had to set up immediately field hospitals and open schools. In October, November, and December we focused on earthquake management, earthquake relief, and used whatever strengths we had for that. You have to lead from the front. The President and I were in the helicopters every other day. I counted my visits; they are 65 or so in that period. So, then this whole medium term activity started and in parallel we were thinking of the reconstruction. While doing damage assessment one lesson that we learnt is doing it with all the stakeholders together. After damage assessment was done, then we had the donors’ conference in Islamabad where we raised, as of today, about 6.5 billion dollars – 4 billion in debts, 2.5 in grants in cash and kind. That money is coming in on schedule. We will not use all the loans. We will only use those which are meeting the parameters we have set for debt, which are soft loans only. If they are hard loans we will thank the donor, but not accept them. We do not feel that we should undertake expensive debt for reconstruction because we have enough of the other money. By the way most of the money coming in is soft.

The other area was reaching the world. Some people acted, some reacted, and some had to be convinced to come. But I think what we saw in Pakistan during that period was an unusual galvanizing of the world also. Countries from Central America, Latin America, North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Middle East, you name it, they were here. They came with a spirit and zeal to help.

The other thing which happened is that large parts of the earthquake affected areas were in Azad Kashmir and many people had said that for various reasons no foreigner would be allowed to go in there. There were perceptions that this is a no go area. But we opened all the areas. That was another major decision we took. And when people went there they were shocked. Those people were as normal and as friendly as anybody else. Nothing was happening there which was prejudicial to the security of anybody. Therefore, the taboos which existed sometimes in our mind and sometimes in visitors mind were shattered. In terms of global coverage the countries, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, US, Cuba, EU, Japan, China, Iran, Turkey, South Korea, Cuba, and many others came to help.

I will share with you the twelve lessons we learnt from this exercise. **First**, is participation by all, local and foreign. This means is inclusive rather than stop people from coming in. It will create problems in logistics and coordination but the openness will create euphoria, one should build on it. **This was a conscious decision. NGOs, media, corporate, individuals etc. had a major role.**
**Second**, in a major disaster you have to show leadership and rapid response, lead from the front. In our case those 65 visits made by me made a difference. When you go and people see you it helps reduce trauma because the government is seen to be acting and caring.

**Third**, is strategic coordination. While you open up, the coordination mechanism must be world class. All the actors have to be brought in. It took us a while. But after many meetings, finally we established FRC – that window became a real window. That is why the whole effort was successful. We also set up a call centre within days, with 800 numbers, where people could call and inquire about how to help.

**Four**, have clear mandates. People must know what they are responsible for, what is the Relief Commissioner doing, what is the army unit doing and what is ERRA going to do. We clarified any overlap and confusion.

**Five**, is that the approach of one size fit for all is not correct. Every disaster is different, every local factor is different, and the psyche of the people is different. So, one size fit for all does not work. You have to adapt and adapt to the local scene, their sensitivities, their own demographics, culture, and physical environment. What may work in tsunami may not work in Pakistani earthquake. What works in Pakistani earthquake may not work in Moroccan earthquake. So you have to really focus on the local scene.

**Six**, is about the spirit of voluntarism. It was there latent, but it came out and what we have tried to do, with some success, is to tap it and institutionalize it. We have started National Volunteer Movement and other activities. Many NGOs also got energized because they got the support, like Ms. Khattak just mentioned. She led an effort and now it is a symbol for the whole world or the country.

**Seven**, is role of the media, local and foreign, in public awareness. The media played a very effective role. We must be open to media and that is one of the decisions we took. What happened is that major networks broadcast their evening news or their nightly shows from Muzaffarabad and Balakot. Major anchors were here and there was for the couple of weeks that media blitz, which helped us create awareness locally and globally. We got some punches in the process but I think they were valuable punches. This kept everybody on the toes. I think the Pakistani and international media did a marvelous job.

**Eight**, is that the relations between the government, the donors, the NGOs, and the UN has to be seamless. Total openness and a spirit of teamwork, sharing and caring must drive this whole effort. If we get in our cocoons and work with our own limited agenda it will not work. This was encouraged and to a large extent it worked and succeeded. This gives you more thrust in dealing with the major catastrophes.

**Nine**, is to have a clear exit strategy. Here comes the difficult issue. We used to think what is going to happen in three months? What is the roadmap? Where
will the people go? Are they going to live in tents all their lives? How do we deal
with the widows, orphans, the amputees, the paraplegics, quadriplegics, etc?
So, we need to have a clear, well thought out exit strategy. In our case, for
rehabilitation, reconstruction we created a separate organization.

Ten, we in Pakistan learnt that the process and the institutions responsible for
creating and enforcing building codes were a disaster. There were old
regulations. Now, we are redoing our building codes. One lesson we have learnt
is that the engineering solutions can counter any major risks. Building code
must be holistic.

Eleven, is that one must have a permanent disaster management authority in
any country with well qualified staff. We did not have one. So, everything was
improvised. We in Pakistan are setting up a National Disaster Management
Agency, so that the core competency can be developed. This agency has to have
some level of disaster preparedness. There is need to promote public education,
public volunteerism, and people have to be trained – even the armed forces,
police and civil society – in disaster management. People did a lot because there
was the zeal to do it, but we need formal training. Data base has to be created
and maintained.

Twelve, is transparency, the cornerstone of any good disaster management
effort. Interact with the Press. Put everything on the Web, use the media,
educate the media and take them along to the affected areas. We took
hundreds of media persons to the affected areas. Also, for any money spent,
donated or otherwise, the mechanism must be transparent. We have put details
on the Web. We have statutory audits, we have put a parliamentary group, a
senior civil society group, the auditor general, and external auditors in the
President’s Relief Fund. We have four levels of control and that is why we got
Rs.10 billion and even more are coming in.
We also came up with the twelve point strategy, few weeks after the
earthquake, as a roadmap of disaster management and reconstruction. I have
had a meeting with a Professor from Russia, who lives in California. He is one
of the world’s experts in probability analysis and predictions. We had a very
cerebral discussion and we have decided to open in Islamabad an earthquake
prediction and probability analysis centre. This capability exists. We will get
experts from all over the world and also our own. We want to make this a
regional centre so that we have some element of forewarning, which may not be
hundred percent. Secondly, with the help of Norway, Turkey, China, and
Japan and our own engineers we did a lot of seismic surveys of the whole
affected areas, and now we have identified or classified these areas into low,
medium and high risk areas. This is linked to the building codes. We will have
our building codes adapted to low, medium and high risk areas. Engineering
solutions can be found, though costs may go up. So, the fault line can be seen
and the probability of anything to happen can be found. All this will be shared
with the people.

In the end, let me once again say that we have tried to create opportunity out of adversity. As the
President mentioned yesterday, we are rebuilding the homes, we will start next month, and we hope by the
time the winter comes the homes will be built. All are on ownership basis and self help. We are giving
money to the people. We have also given the plans and we will monitor them. Then the people will go back
to their own areas of residence. We do not want people to be permanently in tents. We are also building
the infrastructure, schools, universities, colleges, the basic health units, hospitals, government offices,
roads, bridges, the electricity and telephone links. We are going in to a massive rebuilding exercise, which
will result in an infrastructure in these areas much better than they had before.

Let me say in conclusion that we are proud as Pakistanis that the world came to our help. This also shows
that when a disaster hits the world, the world comes together. That is the good news. Pakistan is grateful
to every Pakistani and every citizen of any country, every organization, the press, civil society, NGOs, and
all the donor agencies, for what they did for us. However, we need to institutionalize the mechanism. Let
me make an appeal that we must build in United Nations a fund where if an emergency happens, the
United Nations ability to act, react must be instant. And then depending on the scale of the disaster we do
more detailed fund raising, like many countries and Pakistan did. We need to work together; we need to
learn from our experiences and together, I know, we can build a peaceful, prosperous world. This is what
humanity is all about. Lets commit to each other, we will all work for making this world a more peaceful
and prosperous place.

**In order to turn the adversity caused by the massive destruction caused by the October 2005
earthquake, the Prime Minister has devised a twelve point reconstruction and rehabilitation strategy.**

Moving survivors from rubbles to tents and decent transitional shelters as quickly as possible, ultimately
moving towards construction of model cities for permanent settlement of homeless people while accounting
for concerns regarding the “titling” issue.

Identifying overlaps and gaps in relief in impacted areas, regulating private, foreign and public sector relief
goods and services and fill gaps. Gearing up medical treatment of the injured and initiating National
Program for Psychological Services for the survivors.

Chalking out a detail plan for permanent settlement of orphan boys and girls including their education.
Arranging for transitional schools, hospitals, other public offices to restore the government structure.

Preparing reconstruction plan for the impacted areas including full restoration of infrastructure, setting
priorities, coordinating support at the ground level and implementation of the plan in a more accountable
and transparent manner.

Preparing “Transitioning from Tents to Communities Plan” entailing damage assessment, permanent shelter
and housing programs, credit and other livelihood programs, and funding for cash-for-work programs to
help speed the move from tents to more permanent communities. It shall include private sector
sponsorship program for villages, schools, health facilities, orphan centers, or any other related
facilities. Plan to restore the livelihoods of the survivors; to finance new economic activities to raise family
incomes above their pre-earthquake levels; and to increase the capacity of local governments,
nongovernmental organizations and businesses to undertake the reconstruction effort.

Jobs for local people in the reconstruction will require large vocational training programs as thousands of
masons, woodworkers, supervisors and laborers are needed.

Estimating financial resource requirements and identify gaps. Devise a reporting system to ensure that
donations are being used appropriately and a unified scorecard to show what we have achieved and what
remains to be done. Developing a joint action plan matrix detailing precisely who will do what, where and
when, to avoid duplication of effort, ensure efficient use of resources and leave no person or community
behind.

To prepare model action plan for disaster preparedness and coordinating a coherent response to future
disasters as well as crises including reinforced preventive measures and capacity for emergency response.