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**SBP welcomes Bank of China International CEO/Chairperson in Islamabad**

“Closer Cooperation in the banking sector will assist in strengthening relationship further with China. Number of mega projects which huge Chinese companies are implementing in Pakistan necessitates smooth and efficient banking arrangements to meet the banking needs”, this was the core message conveyed by the Acting Governor/Deputy Governor of State Bank of Pakistan Mr. Saeed Ahmad in a meeting welcoming the Chief Executive Officer Ms Li Tong of Bank of China International (BoCI). BoCI is a wholly owned subsidiary of Bank of China.

BoCI is the investment banking unit of BoC. It is a huge bank with assets over US\$ 2.26 trillion and share capital of US\$ 45 billion and presence in 42 countries. It has been a Fortune Global 500 entity for the last two decades

Ms. Li Tong headed a group of more than 20 businessmen including CEO's of mega companies to explore further cooperation between Pakistan and China in the field of energy, infrastructure development, transport, manufacturing, mining and banking. In the meeting at SBP she was accompanied with Ms. Cheng Yan MD & Vice Chairman, Mr. Michael Cheng and Mr. Wang Jia and local representatives. Mr. Saeed Ahmad highlighted the close and very special relationship which exists between Pakistan and China covering a number of important areas. The Pakistan-China Economic Corridor and Joint Cooperation Committee are the hall mark of deepening friendship. This was recently got strengthened by the visit of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to China and Chinese Premier's visit to Pakistan.

The visit by BoCI CEO/Chairperson to SBP in Islamabad was meant to discuss the possibility of opening a branch of BoCI in Pakistan. Executive Director of State Bank, Muhammad Ashraf Khan also attended and participated in the meeting. Ms. Tong appreciated the warm reception extended to her by SBP and the brief given to her about the process and requirements of establishing a foreign bank, a branch or a subsidiary in Pakistan.

SBP informed her about the close working relationship which exists between People Bank of China (PBC) – the Central Bank and SBP and the Currency Swap Agreement which has been in place between the two countries. Ms. Tong was apprised about Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) which has branches in Islamabad and Karachi and in the process of opening the third branch in Lahore. The experience of ICBC in Pakistan has been good. Though there is no Pakistani banks' branch operating in China but negotiations are at advanced stage to establish a branch of a leading Pakistani bank's branch there in near future. Mr. Saeed Ahmad reminded CEO of BoCI that currently Pakistan enjoys the privilege of being a member a group of the countries which are allowed to participate in the local bond market in China. Also an MoU signing ceremony in Beijing is scheduled to take place in the last week of October to establish Asia International Infrastructure Bank for which Pakistan is one of the founding members. The ceremony will be attended by Finance Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar at a special invitation of Chinese authorities together with other senior officials from Ministry of Finance.

Ms. Tong and her team showed interest in undertaking further work in order to establish BoC