AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION
ISLAMABAD

17 March 2017

Press Release

AUSTRALIA DAY IN SPRING CELEBRATES CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The Australian High Commission celebrated *Australia Day in Spring 2017* in Lahore this evening showcasing a musical performance that highlighted the shared and diverse cultural heritage of Pakistan and Australia.

The performance featured Pakistani-Australian singer/songwriter Mahmood Khan, who had flown in from Australia especially to join the celebrations, and students from the Leif Larsen Music Centre Hunza playing traditional Burushaski music of Gilgit Baltistan on Rabab and Sitar. A world music artist originally from Lahore, Mahmood topped the Australian music chart in 2009 with the single 'Like the River' recorded live at the Sydney Opera House. Mahmood is known in Pakistan for his recordings with the late Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

Australian High Commissioner Margaret Adamson, joined by Chief Guest Mujtaba Shuja ur Rehman, Minister for Excise and Taxation, Government of Punjab, said that the theme of this year's Australia Day function: *Celebrating Cultural Diversity* was an opportunity to reflect on the cultural diversity of Australia and Pakistan and the strong people-to-people links between the two countries in the 70th year of Pakistan's existence and of diplomatic relations.

"Australia is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse nations in the world, where a migrant arrives to start a new life every 1 minute and 29 seconds. Almost 400 different languages, including indigenous languages, are spoken collectively by Australia's 24 million people, and an estimated 75 per cent of Australia's population identify with an ancestry other than Australian," Ms Adamson said.

Over 55,000 people of Pakistani origin are living and working in Australia. These people-to-people links and a shared diversity of culture strengthen the Australia-Pakistan relationship.

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Note for journalists and editors: For more information, please contact: Media and Public Diplomacy at bushra.naz@dfat.gov.au