

Statement

by



Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia

Director General, ICWA

at

International Conference on

‘India’s Partnership with Countries in Southern Africa’

at

Chandigarh, India

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We join our partner institution – Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID), Chandigarh -- to extend a warm welcome to H. E. Shri Shiv Raj Patil, Governor of Punjab. He has done us a singular honour by consenting to inaugurate this important international conference focused on India-Southern Africa Partnership.

2. This conference forms part of a larger, carefully crafted programme, which aims to impart momentum to India-Africa cooperation by engaging civil society, academic and strategic community. The Africa programme was launched on the occasion of the second India-Africa Forum Summit, held in Addis Ababa in May 2011. The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), the country's top foreign policy think tank and the programme's chief execution agency, has organized four international conferences in Africa - Addis Ababa (May 2011), Lagos (March 2012), Dakar (October 2013) and Accra (October 2013). Besides, two international conferences were held in India - Goa (June 2012) and Manipal (October 2013), and this is a third conference in the same series.

3. More conferences will follow, in both Africa and India in future. We are convinced that an integrated and comprehensive approach covering Government-to-Government, Business-to-Business and People-to-People dialogue and cooperation is the key to forging and sustaining a strong partnership between India and Africa.

4. As the Chandigarh conference will strive to place a special focus on Southern Africa, it is essential to highlight a few basic characteristics of and the challenges facing this region. Perhaps the best way to chart the contours of this subject is to assess the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the present context. It is a regional grouping of fifteen countries ranging from the Democratic Republic of Congo to South Africa in the north-south axis and from Angola and Botswana to Mauritius and Madagascar in west-east axis. SADC was established in 1992. It represented the transformation of the previous grouping known as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), set up in 1980.

5. SADC represents about 260 million people and has a combined GDP of about half a trillion dollars. It nurtures the vision of 'a Common Future,' a future that will ensure economic

well-being, improvement of the standards of living and quality of life, freedom and social justice, and peace and security for the people of Southern Africa. The community strives to achieve these goals through increased regional integration, built on democratic principles and equitable and sustainable development. In its mission, the community has achieved some success, but it continues to face challenges of securing inclusive and speedy development. Therefore, it looks for external assistance and partnerships on a mutually acceptable basis.

6. In this specific context, we look forward to hearing from African partners about the development priorities of the region today. They will perhaps touch on the progress as well as constraints concerning implementation of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) for the period 2005-2020. Their presentations will help the Indian participants to appreciate the region's present programmes and persisting concerns, and then to suggest areas of complementarity. In the list of areas to be identified, rural development, agricultural diversification and capacity-building are likely to figure.

7. We also assume that the participants from both sides will examine and debate what India has to offer in the backdrop of Southern Africa's other options. It is important to note that both traditional powers (e.g. US, EU and Japan) and rising powers (e.g. China, Russia and Brazil) have been active in Africa. However, India's capability in the sphere of technology, institutional capacity-building, trade and investment, and sharing of development experience and good practices have proved to be of enormous relevance. This package comes, of course, with a few constraints.

8. India's relations with Southern Africa are managed at three levels—the African Union, regional and bilateral. These relations have been developing well, but not optimally. Of India's total trade with Africa (worth US\$ 70 billion in October 2013), about 40% was with Southern Africa. Of India's total oil and gas imports from Africa, about 10% comes from Southern Africa. India's cumulative FDI inflow to SADC region during 1996-2012 period, was valued at US\$ 28 billion. As regards India's development assistance, the region has received much less than Western and Eastern Africa.

9. Hence India-Southern Africa relations have considerable potential for further growth and diversification. We shall look for new ideas emerging from our deliberations.

10. Experts assembled here might wish to deploy the tools of specialized knowledge, objectivity, candour and empathy in order to determine the desirability and feasibility of specific proposals for cooperation projects and programmes. If we are able to come up collectively with a set of concrete suggestions and recommendations for the consideration of policy makers of both sides, our task as the organizers of this conference would be completed satisfactorily.

11. In the end, may I thank most warmly our partner CRRID as well as all participants present at this conference. Above all, we are most grateful to H. E. Governor and we now look forward to listening to his keynote speech.

Thank you very much for your attention.

**The speech was read out by Ms Shamma Jain, Joint Secretary, ICWA.*
