



Delhi Dialogue V

India-ASEAN: Vision for Partnership and Prosperity
19-20 February 2013



Welcome Remarks

by



Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia

Director General, ICWA

at

Delhi Dialogue V

'India-ASEAN: Vision for Partnership and Prosperity'

at

Federation House, FICCI

New Delhi, India

February 19, 2013

Shri Salman Khurshid, Minister of External Affairs,
H.E. Le Luong Minh, Hon'ble Secretary General ASEAN,
Their Excellencies Ministers from ASEAN countries
Smt. Naina Lal Kidwai, President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry,
Heads of Diplomatic Missions of ASEAN countries in New Delhi,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

I extend a warm welcome to the Minister of External Affairs, other special guests seated with him as well as all our distinguished guests who are present here today. I am particularly delighted to welcome all those guests who have come from the ASEAN region to participate in Delhi Dialogue V, a special and unique conference.

2. Let me begin by thanking the Ministry of External Affairs for their valuable support and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, our principal partner in organising this event. We are, of course, grateful to all other supporting institutions i.e. the SAEA Group Research, Singapore, Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia, Jakarta, and Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

3. As one of the two principal hosts, my institution – the Indian Council of World Affairs -- offers DD V as a most befitting platform of Track 1.5 dialogue on India-ASEAN relations. As the country's oldest foreign policy think tank, ICWA has contributed immensely to deepening India's relations with Asia for the past seven decades.

4. The theme of this year's conference, as you are aware, is 'India-ASEAN: Vision for Partnership and Prosperity.' Previous four conferences, held since 2009, have secured tangible gains towards deepening our mutual understanding and strengthening our cooperation. It is, therefore, a matter of shared pride, that Delhi Dialogue, as an institution, found an apt mention in the Vision Statement issued at India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in December 2012.

5. Since the launch of India's Look East Policy in early 1990s, our multifaceted partnership has come a long way. As Prime Minister Manmohan Singh observed at the historic summit in December 2012: 'The breadth and intensity of India's engagement with Southeast Asia is, unmatched by any of our other regional relationships.' At present, there are approximately 25 mechanisms coordinating the ASEAN-India partnership in the areas of political-security cooperation, economic ties and socio-cultural cooperation. A relationship based on strong historical foundations and rooted in mutual interest, it has now been elevated to a strategic partnership and is poised to scale new heights in future. Now that this partnership has entered the third decade, it is a task of utmost importance that we earnestly begin to enlarge our convergence of view and strengthen our strategy for cooperative action.

6. In addressing this challenge, we -- political leaders, senior officials, captains of business and industry and members of strategic, academic and media community -- should exchange views regularly and candidly on the changing environment. Keeping this in view, we have, through mutual consultations, crafted an innovative agenda for this year. It will place a special focus on security cooperation, non-traditional security challenges (including food security, water management, pandemics and energy cooperation), likely expansion of cooperation between CLMV countries and North-East India, and the trends towards expanding networks through connectivity between India and ASEAN.

7. I am happy to announce that between today and tomorrow, we would have the opportunity to listen to 39 speakers out of which 21 have come from the ASEAN region. I gratefully acknowledge their presence among us as the testimony of their commitment to the cause of a stronger relationship in future.

8. Finally, it is sincerely hoped that this conference would further assist us in raising public awareness about the stakes and issues involved in the India-ASEAN partnership, undertaking its objective appraisal and generating new ideas and recommendations for the benefit of policy makers and other stakeholders.

Thank you very much for your attention.
