

Opening Remarks

by

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Director General, ICWA

at
Launch of the book

'Latin America, The Caribbean and India: Promise and Challenge'

at
Sapru House, New Delhi
9 April 2015

Sri Vinod Kumar, Additional Secretary in MEA, H.E. Mr. Carlos Sergio Sobral Duarte, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil, H.E. Mr. Javier Paulinich Velarde, Ambassador of the Republic of Peru, Ambassador R. Rajagopalan, former President of the Association of Indian Diplomats, and Ambassador Deepak Bhojwani, Author of the book to be released by the Hon'ble Minister of State,

Welcome to this special event!

We are particularly grateful to senior officials of MEA who have found time from their busy schedule to be with us today. May I begin by congratulating them for the splendid success of the Operation Rahat and its own valuable contribution to the evacuation of thousands of Indian and foreign nationals belonging to 26 countries, including US, UK, France, Canada and Pakistan. You will shortly see a special video message sent by Gen. V.K.Singh, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs from Djibouti where he is presently overseeing this operation. I also express our warm appreciation for the sizeable presence amidst us of diplomatic representatives of the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region.



It is a joyous moment for us at ICWA to mark and celebrate the launch of one of its latest publications, authored by a friend and colleague who worked with us here at the Sapru House for a few months in 2012. Deepak, whom I have personally known for decades, impressed all of us immensely by his deep knowledge and passionate interest in LAC affairs.

As his temporary assignment with us was ending, we had a conversation in our office when I suggested the idea of this book. I am glad that he gamely took up the challenge and has produced a work of excellent quality in record time. He has the best credentials to write this book. Those who have or would read the book cover-to-cover, as I have done, may agree that it reveals his passion as well as his objectivity, insight, and empathy, a rare combination of virtues for a first-time author. I sincerely hope that we shall see more works coming out of Deepak's pen or, may I say, his I-Pad or PC!

A major strength of the book is its panoramic presentation of the diversity of Latin America and the Caribbean in all its hues and colours, filtered through the prism of the past and the present. He pinpoints, in Latin America, 'a scenario of political diversity with an appearance (or illusion) of homogeneity.' The author's central argument is that India-LAC relations deserve to be expanded, diversified and strengthened for the sake of mutual benefit. He explains, with conviction, the region's multi-dimensional significance for India. He stresses that the Indian establishment should aim to secure 'a high level of concert' for drawing up and executing 'a comprehensive strategy' on India's relations with the region. Equally, he points out, the LAC nations too need to fulfill their responsibility to connect and cultivate ties with India in a more sustained manner, given the changing dynamics of global politics in the 21st century.

In this regard, may I make three additional points here?

Firstly, apart from focusing on strengthening relations with the more important LAC partners bilaterally and promoting dialogue and cooperation with regional organizations like CELAC and the Pacific Alliance, India needs to consider seriously the proposal to

convene an India-LAC Forum Summit on the same lines as India-Africa Forum Summit. A summit-anchored approach will put spotlight on LAC as nothing else could, signifying clearly that the LAC forms an integral part of India's expanding worldview.



Secondly, as the leading Think Tank promoting the study of LAC affairs, ICWA remains committed to the proposal to establish the India-LAC Think Tank Forum. We have taken some initiatives in this regard. We trust that if a few key LAC Diplomatic Missions in Delhi could come forward to cooperate with us, this idea can turn into a reality. We shall also welcome renewed support of MEA for this purpose.

Finally, in the past three years, ICWA has produced a total of 43 publications, the bulk of them being full-length books by single authors or edited by veterans. As I scan faces in the audience, I see a few potential authors! We would like to encourage them to benefit from ICWA's highly successful and generous research project programme. You are welcome to contact us for further details.

In the end, let me express our deep appreciation to the author, Ambassador Deepak Bhojwani, for his singular success in producing a remarkable work of policy research. The presence of so many ambassadors and senior officials demonstrates that this project is of considerable interest and relevance to our Government as well as to the governments of the LAC region. It will certainly generate much popular interest.

