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by



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on

**"Multilateralism and its Role in Building and
Sustaining Peace in Africa and Asia"**

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Your Excellency Ambassador Viswanathan, I understand you spent some time in our part of the world and it is a pity that you did not visit to The Gambia because, mind you, at some point the English wanted to exchange, the French wanted to exchange Gabon with The Gambia and they refused. And when they refused, they proposed Cordova. So Cordova could have been Anglophone and The Gambia, Francophone. To the Director General Governor, I am really delighted to be with you. The Secretary General Office of the President, and Head of the Civil Service, your Excellency, the Gambia's High Commissioner to India, the Joint Secretary, distinguished Ambassadors, Ladies and gentleman, all protocols duly and respectfully observed.

I am delighted to be here with you today and I will definitely focus on Africa. I will not deliberate much on Asia, but I will talk about Africa. I really thank you for the opportunity to be able to interact with this distinguished group. As we deliberate on ways and means acceptable to move away from conflict management to conflict prevention through diplomatic channels, I deem it worthy to note and to remind, that this daunting task has been at the heart of the United Nations Secretary General's good office since it was founded in 1945. 73 years on, we have seen our organization, the United Nations grow and exhibit a wider range of conflict prevention tools at its disposal than ever before and yet only a few success stories. It raises a pertinent question on what must we do, as people guided by the founding principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, to which we must be true. We acknowledge and recognize efforts made since 2006 by the UN in professionalizing suggestions, made by numerous statesman, into an established mediation support unit, which among other things provide support and advice to invoicing the feel and manages a standby team of mediation expert deployable anywhere in the world within 72 hours. It is without a doubt that this established professional body has played and will continue to play a crucial role in its attempt to prevent conflict or the escalation of conflict by diplomatic means; however, time has availed us enough space to learn from its several years of preventive diplomacy and time has also provided us with wisdom to agree or disagree on its success.

In this view, it is not feasible that there is indeed a new appetite among United Nation member states and agencies to move towards preventive action where all indication argues towards both. Mindful of this economic appeal, yet it is advisable in our view to engage and employ a balanced approach of preventive diplomacy and preventive action. The idea is to devote a relatively modest amount of resources to prevent violent conflict, rather than interest in drastically more costly humanitarian peacekeeping reconstruction or stabilization operations. However, the concept of preventive action has proven to be controversial and

there appears to be a consensus that conflict prevention through diplomatic means is better calculative and a politically acceptable norm, that takes into account the opinion of sovereign states as well as other interested parties, and it helps to prevent dispute and conflicts, which could potentially pose a threat to regional peace and stability arising between States.



With all this in mind and unflinching support that we have for preventive diplomacy, we propose that consideration should be given to action-oriented conflict prevention in some cases and, where necessary, each case should be determined in accordance with the circumstances. And then we will talk about cooperation of the UN with regional bodies, and I think the case of The Gambia is a pertinent example of a good collaboration between United Nation ECOWAS and our member states. The concept of the United Nation cooperation with regional bodies is not just an imaginary concept, rather a legally embedded concept in Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. The Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, has also repeatedly echoed the concept in his many statements on peace building and peacekeeping operations. The concept of cooperation set our organization to cooperate with the United Nations, with regional mechanism or agencies dealing with matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as appropriate for regional action and existing and acting consistently with the purpose and principles of the United Nations.

Although the UN Charter deliberately provides no precise definition of regional arrangements and agencies, we must make good use of the flexibility, for any action taken by a group of states, to deal with a matter appropriate for regional action that would contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.

In Africa, regional and sub-regional arrangements such as the African Union, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Economic Community of West Africa and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have jointly participated with the United Nations regarding different conflict situations and here I will take you to The Gambia experience. You all know that in 2017 we had elections in the Gambia. After the election, the President accepted defeat just to make a U-turn a week after. So during that difficult period, we remember that we mobilized a group of Ambassadors, and we told them in life there are defining moments in history where you have to take a decision, as during that week, The Gambia was the star of Africa. I remember I was in a program, an award ceremony attended by the then late UNFPA director, Dr. Babatunde of Bless Memory, and he did not know that I was in the hall and he was saying that as an African he was very proud that week because The Gambia has shown an example to the world. After 22 years of a very strong dictatorial regime, we went into election and the President conceded defeat, so we had no lesson to receive from anyone, and everybody applauded and someone mentioned that I was in the hall and I stood up and everybody was clapping. But during those days, I was worried because I had been the Foreign Minister of the President. I have been very close to him and knowing him and knowing my society, knowing the culture of The Gambia, I was seen writing on the wall that the future was not very promising. Even at the level of the United Nation, I was allotted the Peace Building Commission chaired then by our friend Kamau. I told him it is important to make a statement where we enjoin the government to respect the will of the people. I did not care much about losing my job as an Ambassador, what was important was the verdict of the people to stand. He went to the peace building commission, asked them to issue a statement, but I said you cannot issue a statement. He said but the Ambassador spoke to me and I think we should take his view with consideration and during that week, wherever I went and people were clapping and praising The Gambia, I told them to be mindful, to not get carried away by this euphoria, and the very day, he made a U-turn.

I met with the then Chair of the Security Council, and he said everything is fine. I said everything is not fine. He said why you are saying that. I said I am a Gambian, I know my culture, and there are signs when you see them, that this is not promising. So in the evening when he made the U-turn, everybody thought may be I should say no. I think it is important for people to be humble enough and to have the decency to listen to those who

are concerned, the nationals of each and every country. You cannot sit in New York, in Brussels, in Geneva and think that you know the country more than those who are coming from those countries. So it is important that our views are taken on board and into consideration. So when he made the decision to make a U-turn, Kamau, the then chair of the Peace Building Commission went back to them and said I told you and then now we started mobilizing the international community because The Gambia alone was not in a position to do it. Because where you have a government with all the military might with all the police, it is difficult for them to say you will challenge them and when you do that challenge, having some kind of uprising will be the best thing that you could do to that government because they drag you into the field where they mastered rules of the games. But then the UN issued a statement and ECOWAS was followed and our immediate neighbor Senegal also decided to mobilize forces to make sure that the verdict of the people stand and one most important lesson to be learned from the Gambia experience is the immediate application of sustainable peace program that the Gambia Government identified in connection with the situation. immediately after the Peace Building Commission undertook a mission to the Gambia with the Department of Political Affairs just after ECOWAS was mobilized because all the heads of states of the region from President Buhari to the outgoing President of Sierra Leone, all the region mobilized to make sure that we avoid another violent conflict and make sure that the verdict of the people will stand. When things started to be tough, other African brothers were involved in the process and that is how we got equatorial Guinea to intervene and Chad facilitated, many people don't know that, but Chad facilitated some of the requests made by the then President to evacuate some of his vehicles and materials. So that was a country where Africa mobilizes its resources.

ECOWAS was our immediate neighbor and thanks to their intervention and the UN, we avoided a major conflict and then immediately after the Peace Building Commission, Department of Political Affairs came to the Gambia. And just like in a perfect world where you have no silos between different UN bodies, they walk in harmony and hands in glove; they provided seed money to kick start the transitional program in the Gambia, which culminated in the adoption of the National Development Plan, the setting up of the Truth Reconciliation and Reparation Commission and the Constitutional Review Commission. Today we are witnessing a very traumatic experience in Gambia where during the Truth Reconciliation and Reparation Commission, people are coming and making statements, confessing, but as a nation that is what we need because the true and free people _____
(14: 00 to 14.36 foreign language).

Since 1976, I saw one of the interview of President Jawara when he went to France, he was talking about this breach, but in reality, the fact of the matter is that there was no political

will to make it happen, but thanks to these two Presidents, this is a landmark project for regional integration between Gambia and Senegal and the whole sub region will benefit from it. The Peace Building Commission is proactive in its efforts in sustaining peace in the Gambia, also extends its mandate beyond providing support to peace efforts in post conflict countries to sustain peace in fragile countries. This is manifestly in line with the Security Council Resolution 2282 and General Assembly Resolution 70262. The sustaining peace agenda, which encompasses the whole conflict cycle ranging from prevention to peace building, has introduced a new paradigm shift across the United Nation Peace and Security Architecture. The 2030 agenda for sustainable development also reinforces sustaining peace agenda by laying a solid foundation for the creation of peace and inclusive societies. United Nations Secretary General, upon taking office, has launched an appeal for peace, which attaches great importance to conflict prevention and sustaining peace. The Gambia is neither is a post conflict country nor a situational country on the PVC agenda rather a country in fragility where preventive diplomacy with a touch of action prevails. Today, The Gambia is an authority that can speak in favor of balance preventive diplomacy and preventive action as a beneficiary. We live in a region _____ **(16: 40 to 17.42 foreign language).**

We are all together with India for the reform of the Security Council that does not reflect the reality of this world today and Africa has a common position and even though we have our common position we contact. Some of us who were very active in 1965 were headed by India in playing a pioneering role there and we will go and exchange our views with sole and the unique objective of reforming the Security Council to reflect the realities of the world. At the UN we all know the strong voice of India and Africa has been working hand in glove with India and the African group. That manifested itself even during the election of Justice Bhandari, where up to last minute the competition was very tough with some candidates from the United Kingdom and others, but we decided to support India, even though at the Security Council I think the order had majority vote, but the general assembly is the ultimate body and we continue voting and from one voting, from one round of voting to another, the number keep on increasing, so at some point they want to show that we definitely have to withdraw. So that is the kind of cooperation we are all seeking with countries like India that have been partnering, fighting alongside Africa during our liberation struggle up to today and we always say that India is a country where we can learn a lot, because you have all kinds of, we have seen how you have graduated from underdeveloped country to a developing and developed country. Though you still maintain that you are not a developed country, but we know that India is a power house in this world and the United Nations is the ultimate body where we really need to take the struggle, because as that a marshall who used to say that “if the United Nations cannot bring peace

but it can”, let me quote him right, it has been said that the “United Nations was not created in order to bring us to heaven but in order to save us from hell.” And I think today that is the role of the United Nations and we must all make sure that we have a very effective organization and I am confident that with the reforms going on, we will have an organization that will serve its purpose. Thank you very much.

Question and Answer Session

Female speaker: Good evening. I am Surabhi, I am a research fellow at the Council. Your Excellency, it was an excellent presentation. My question is more general in nature. You spoke about Gambia’s experience and the UN’s role in post conflict, and speaking from your experience, how do you view UN. We often speak about how it has become redundant; and the need for reform of the United Nations. So, flowing from Gambia’s experience, your take on the current multilateral order and the need for reform?

Male speaker: Yeah, I am Dr. Sarabjit Dudeja. Excellency, can you share your experience of both regimes during dictatorship and after the democracy? How human life has changed, whether it is our common life or general common man, and particularly women’s life? Whether they have changed a lot or same thing is happening?

Female speaker: Thank you chair. My question is little relating to the region, particularly related to the terrorism aspect that we are seeing in West Africa. And, since the subject is related to multilateralism, we have seen that multilateral efforts have been made to tackle the issue of terrorism, particularly the multilateral Joint Task Force. How do you think that it has been effective, or is it still work in progress?

(P): Thank you very much. For the first question of the research fellow of the Council, Gambia will not see the UN as a redundant organization, because, as I said, as in a perfect world, you know, the Gambia is cited as an example, even by the Secretary General, for its agenda on sustaining peace. Because, in the Gambia, as I said, just after the conflict, during the impasse, UN played a key role in mobilising forces and endorsing the intervention of ECOWAS that would have been difficult without the support of the UN Security Council. And later, when the UN came, and without any cumbersome and tedious procedure, kick started the process just after the intervention of the political department. And today, **the reforms exactly is signed** to do concretely what happened in the Gambia, because there you do not have any silos between the two different bodies, because you have competing agencies of the UN in a country where you have to go through lot of procedures even to have access to funds that will enable you implement

your action. But, in the case of the Gambia, just as in a perfect world, just after the arrival of the head of the political department, the political affairs department head came, and from there he announced that the support will come, just immediately followed by the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office. And, the money was dispersed, and we kick-started the whole process. So, at least in the case of the Gambia we have seen a very effective organisation; and I think without the endorsement of the UN and the intervention of ECOWAS, it would have been in a very terrible situation.

For the question of Gambia before and after dictatorship: you know, we in the Gambia, dictatorship has its debilitating effects where everything is around the personality cult where everybody tries to please one person and at some point you even wonder what is happening to the people, because everything you do is geared towards satisfying one person, and you have a pyramidal system where everything is decided by one person, and that is maintained through a climate of fear, and that's why I am talking about debilitating effects. And today, in the Gambia, you have...But, before, people would not even have a normal conversation because you don't know whether this one is working for the secret police or you are going to be arrested the next day. Today, people are speaking without fear on social media, in the streets. They are not even looking behind them whether someone is watching them or not, but that is also the danger. Because, after the change of regime, people think that the life will be changed overnight, not realising that this is a country with little resources. People did the changes with lot of expectation. So, up to today, the fact of the matter is that government is grappling with managing the expectations, because we went to Brussels, we had a very successful donor conference with huge promises. And, when we came back from Brussels, people thought that you are coming with the money, not knowing that 'people' are talking about donor fatigue. But, there (is) also pledger fatigue. Because, you go to many conferences where you have people pledging million, billions but at the end of the day you don't even see the call after money, but the population will not understand that. A little story, just after the donor conference we had a program in, I think, it was somewhere in Delaware and someone took a video and posted and they say now, "they are eating our money", the money they got from Brussels. And, when the president was coming in the convoy, they saw a black car, they said, "money is inside that car", not knowing that up to now we are chasing, we are running after the pledges, hoping that people will fulfill the pledge so that we can at least realise some of the dreams and then implement, translate into concrete action what is in our national development plan. And the third question?

Male speaker: What about women rights?

(P): The women, in Gambia, you know, women, not only Gambia, you know, for me the debate on women slave or the condition of women is a false debate in Africa. That came with colonialism and with some of these religions because before them African women occupied a pride of place in the society. You had queen like Queen Abra Pokou of the Baoulé, you have Queen Ana Nzinga, you have women participating in political life. It is only with religion and with colonialism that they were marginalised somehow, but Gambian women have been in the forefront of the struggle, and have been very vocal, and I think they also play major role in the changes. Because, at some point they were saying that men are scared of this man. I would not like to mention that, but one day when we were having a chat with some of my younger colleague, and he told me, you know there is only one trouser in this country and one man is wearing it. I felt insulted but at some point I said, well, may be he is right, because, I mean, it is just like that one man is controlling the whole country. But, the day that the women decided to take the bulls by the horn, and we had the first female presidential candidate, and with the noise

they made they shook the society, and then the men also knew that now it is time for us to rise up. So, the women took the lead, and all credit goes to them. Thank you **Mr. Seki** ..., and a new Ministry for Women's Affairs have been created and the minister has just been recently appointed, all the time it was under the office of the vice president, but I think it was last week that a very dynamic woman has been appointed as Ministry for Women's Affairs. And the third question?

Male Speaker: High Commissioner is a woman.

(P) Yes, and one of our most dynamic ambassadors...And, cooperation to fight terrorism. I think it has proven to be very effective, you know today we are having asymmetric warfare. We are dealing with enemies that sleep, dine, laugh with you, and at the night will come back and stop you in the bed. Today, we have a very effective cooperation of our intelligence services, because that is only way, one of the ways, you can find them, because it is not a conventional war, but regional blocs and the multilateral partners are really helping in. The situation is not resolved but at least without them we would have been in a very chaotic and serious situation. So, I think, it is proven to be effective. The battle we have is not yet won. The war and the battle is still on, but we will fight it.

Male speaker: We have time for a second round of two or three questions. That lady there, then the one at the back...and three...

Female speaker: My name is Kanchi Batra, and I am from Diplomatist Magazine. Excellency, we are aware that your country is fondly known as the smiling coast of Africa. I want to understand what has been done or what could be done to enhance soft diplomacy between India and Gambia. Thank you.

Male speaker: My name is Yaruigam from Delhi University. I am teaching there. Your Excellency, I just want to ask one very general question to you. You pointed out very clearly that India is a power today in the world. India's position has risen up so much that we are being recognised as a coming-up nation in the world. But, I just would like to ask you, "Are you satisfied with India's role in maintaining, building and sustaining peace in Africa, in particular in your country. If not, is there any area where you expect from India to involve more and contribute more in building and sustaining peace in Africa.

Male speaker: As-Salamu-Alaykum. My name is Ibou Boye, I am the Ambassador of Senegal. As you know I am Francophone, but I will try to put my question in English. So, everybody can understand how glad I am to attend this meeting between Senegal and Gambia. In the Gambia even if we are two countries, in essence we are one people. Everyday our brothers and sister cross the border, very strong links between our two countries, so as said my minister's situation before the present situation was very tough. So, now this tough situation is behind us. Congratulation! honorable minister. I can say my minister. Thank you for your informative intervention. I am sure that many among us have learnt a lot from this post-election in Gambia. Mr. Minister, I just have a very small question after this meeting, we will exchange in French, I will be more comfortable to discuss with you. To causally, that the peace building in our region, which values should we focus on right now? Thank you so much.

Male speaker: Three questions. I will start with the question of the journalist. I think, the question, you should have asked our ambassador what is she doing, our high commissioner, on that. We have a sizeable number of Indians living, working and doing business in the Gambia

and for a very long time Gambia being an English speaking country, we have lot of Indians teaching in our high school, and some of the leaders of our country have been trained by Indians. I think at some point I met one of the former presidents of the Maldives. He lived in Gambia. But, then, we thought he was Indian, you know from India, because they own a supermarket. And, Indian Ambassador based in Senegal, covering the Gambia, one of them, who is today a senior international civil servant, Atul Khare, a very good friend of mine who is at the UN Under Secretary General, told me he used to come to Gambia to be able to buy English books for because we then had a small book shop in Banjul. So, today, I think the onus is on my humble self and high commissioner to make sure that the relationship between India and the Gambia go from strength to strength, and then we have more Indians coming to the Gambia. But, believe me, those who are living there, they are very comfortable. I do not know of any problem, they are well integrated, doing their business. But, I think, it is important that we encourage also Indian tourists to come to the Gambia. That is way of people to people diplomacy, is very important, and that will consolidate our relationship, and I think that for a better future we need to encourage that. So, ambassador, you have a task at your hand, high commissioner. On the second question, I do not remember.

Male speaker: Can you repeat it?

Male speaker: Yeah, yeah.

Male speaker: I was asking about the role of India, and what do you expect more.

Male speaker: Thank you, sorry, you know I had the long hours of flight and from there I came. India is present in many very difficult fields in Africa, in peacekeeping operation, but I think with the position and the respect that India has in Africa, I think they can play more effective role in bringing people together and in the agenda of sustaining peace because India and Africa is the voice to be reckoned with. On the question what do we have to do with the values? Well, I always say that it is important that our traditional mechanisms of resolving conflicts are taken on board, and even at the United Nations. That is why in the case of the Gambia, I think, we were fortunate because people listened to us, because no one can love us more than ourselves, and no one knows our countries and our continent better than us. As far as Gambia and Senegal are concerned, I always say it is one nation with two states; and that is why I always believe in the fact that our diplomacy should be based on facts and truth. Because, only that country's is the tribulation of time ... **(foreign language)**...; and for that to happen for us to go beyond the rhetorics, we have to make sure that we go beyond the artificial barriers like the borders. I have one of my professors ... **(foreign language)** ...

Male speaker: Thank you Excellency for taking patiently all those questions and enlightening us on some of the very important aspects that our audience raised in the question hour. I do not have anything much to add except that on a personal note I would like that on your next visit, we would like you to talk on a topic which is very interesting, personally for me, because of your research on myths and secrets of world historians of the Mandinga. Why I am saying that because India has a great tradition in oral history. All our great philosophical thoughts over the millennia have been passed down through world traditions. So, I can promise you, I am going to be in touch with the High Commissioner to see whether we can at the ICWA or even at the Observer Research Foundation get some of your scholars on world traditions and have a seminar on that. I think we can learn a lot from each other; and if there are no other comments, ladies and gentleman, please...

(P): Can I say something?

Male speaker: Yeah, please.

(P): I will be more than happy to come for that; you know during my first visit to India, I insisted on visiting Kurukshetra to see where the battle of the Mahabharata took place, because I was part of a network doing research on medieval and epic literature. So, I will be more than happy, and because even in Africa, you know, Africans, you know everything about others but a little about ourselves. So, that is a sad thing. I always give people examples where when we talk about human rights we refer to Magna Carta ... **(foreign language)**... whereas you have something like ... **(foreign language)** ... but little do we know about it. And, Senghor used to say, the president of Senegal ... **(foreign language)** ... We have towering spoken monuments surrounded by wall of silence. So, the onus is on us to do research to know what is where, what is in those substance that is in those towering spoken monuments. I will be more than happy to have a discussion on that. Thank you.

Male speaker: In fact, it is time that we have our own narratives. We have been learning about each other through Western media; and I understand that Africa is a continent with more than a million proverbs which is nothing but wisdom from ancient traditions. And, since you mentioned about how there is we learned more from the West than each other, I remember one African proverb that I would like to say. It says that until the day the lions write their story, the story of the hunt will glorify the hunter. But, that is changing now. Now the lions are telling their own stories. So, with that I think I would conclude and hand over to the Director General.

Female speaker: On behalf of ICWA, I would like to thank his Excellency, Dr. Mamadou Tangara for his insightful lecture. I would also like to thank Ambassador H.H.S. Viswanathan for chairing the event and DG ICWA for his remarks. I would also like to thank the audience for taking out the time to attend the lecture. Before we conclude, may I request DG ICWA to present our publication to our esteemed guest.

(P): Thank you.
