

Valedictory Address

by



Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu

**Hon'ble Vice President of India and
President of Indian Council of World Affairs**

at the
**Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA)
National Conference**
on

**'India-Africa Partnership in a Changing Global Order:
Priorities, Prospects and Challenges'**

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I am delighted to be here at Sapru House for the Valedictory session of the national conference on India - Africa Relations in the Changing Global Order.

Africa has been accorded a very high priority in India's foreign policy. While articulating our Africa policy in 10 broad guiding principles, Prime Minister Modi during his visit to Uganda on 25 July 2018, stated that "we will continue to intensify and deepen our engagement with Africa... it will be sustained and regular".

There are some key areas that have been highlighted as high priority in India's Africa-outreach.

We are clear that our development partnership would be guided by African priorities and agendas. It will be on terms that are comfortable to Africa; that will liberate Africa's potential and not constrain their future.

India, with its vast experience with the digital revolution would certainly support Africa's development; improve delivery of public services; extend education and health; spread digital literacy; expand financial inclusion; and mainstream the marginalized.

India will also work with Africa to improve agriculture as Africa has 60% of the world's arable land, but produces just 10% of the global output.

India and Africa fought colonialism together. Both regions have experienced the exploitation and subsequent ruination associated with colonialism. India will therefore work together for a just, representative and democratic global order that has a voice for one-third of humanity that lives in Africa and India.

As India strengthens and intensifies its engagement with Africa, the need to promote a better understanding on India-African relations and Indian perspective on African Affairs, becomes even more important.

India on its part has initiated a series of policy interventions like TEAM 9 initiative, Focus Africa Programme and India Africa Forums Summit process to strengthen and diversify India's the engagement with African states.

This national conference therefore is very timely and relevant.

I am glad that ICWA has brought together scholars, experts, analysts on African studies from across India to this conference to discuss and debate on wide spectrum of issues relating to India-Africa ties.

It is indeed noteworthy that the conference explored Five most important themes in India-Africa relation, Governance and Geopolitics, Economic and Development Cooperation,

Diaspora Relations, Common Security Challenges, Media, Culture and Education exchange and Promotion of African studies in India.

I am particularly happy that this conference takes place on the threshold of the 150th birth anniversary of the father of our nation. To the vast masses of our country Africa is indistinguishable from the Mahatma's first *Karmabhoomi*. His early struggles for equity and justice contributed greatly to cementing older cultural and historical links between India and Africa.

I am happy to note that the conference over the past two days held very productive discussions on various dimensions of India-Africa relations, the ways to advance our wide-ranging ties and more importantly on means to promote African Studies in India, to bridge the knowledge gap on Africa in India.

India and Africa have always been natural partners in civilization, culture and progress. The bonding has been forged by long traditions of friendship, civilizational contacts, historical goodwill, shared experiences, mutuality of worldviews and interests.



Hon'ble Vice President of India and President ICWA delivering Vaedictory Address.

India has strong historical ties with countries in Africa. The countries in the region share the common legacy of struggle against colonialism. Africa's support played a decisive role in making the Non- Aligned Movement initiated by India, Yugoslavia and Egypt into a powerful voice of the developing world. The sense of solidarity and unity formed during the Cold War days continues to drive India-Africa relations to this date.

Over the last decade we have seen how the relationship has acquired a renewed significance with fundamental changes seen in the respective regions and the international system.

India's rise as a significant economic and global player which aspires to be a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25 as outlined in the Economic Survey-2019 and Africa's rapid economic growth and its desire to take charge of its own destiny, as outlined in its Agenda 2063 adopted in January 2015, are factors that are shaping the contemporary relationship.

Africa's Agenda 2063 today seeks to deliver on a set of **Seven Aspirations** that reflect its desire for shared prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth are realised, and with freedom from fear, disease and want.

Africa's priorities and commitments to its seven aspirations are in line with India's 10 broad guiding principles of its engagement with Africa.

Today Africa is poised to be a significant growth engine in the global economy. It is a continent that holds immense opportunity given its rising economic growth and, education standards; quest for democracy; pursuit for regional integration, relentless efforts to mitigate conflict and address security threats; abundance of natural resources and fastest growing youth population and human capital.

Our interactions with Africa in recent years have acquired vibrancy and dynamism.

There has been unprecedented intensification of our political engagement with Africa with 32 high-level visits to African countries apart from several Ministerial visits; and in addition and we have hosted over 36 leaders from Africa since the third India-Africa Forum Summit held in 2015.

India has already opened 6 of the 18 additional Missions in Africa to increase its diplomatic outreach in Africa. This focus will further strengthen in the years ahead.

Africa has become an important trade and investment partner for us. Our bilateral trade stood at USD 62.66 billion in 2017 - 2018, and cumulative investments in Africa amounting to US\$54 billion, making India the fourth-largest investor in Africa. However there remains great uncharted potential to be explored.

We view the signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), which will make Africa the largest free trade area in the world, as yet another opportunity to boost trade and economic ties with Africa.

Our model of development partnership seeks mutual benefits through a consultative process and is responsive to the needs and priorities of African countries.

Towards this end, our development initiatives including capacity building and human resource development under ITEC, Lines of Credit and Grant Assistance has made India a close partner of Africa in its socio-economic transformation.

We have vital stakes in each other's progress, peace and prosperity.

It is indeed noteworthy that India has provided 189 LOCs to 42 African countries for a total of US\$11 billion, which represents 42 percent of the total amount of LOCs offered by India through EXIM Bank.

The projects that are being implemented under Indian LoCs have expanded our development cooperation and cover a range of sectors including power generation and distribution, water related projects, railways, sugar plants, infrastructure, agriculture, irrigation and Information Communication and Technology.

As development is closely linked with security, preserving peace and security has become an important element in our engagement. Over the years we have deepened our security and defence cooperation with many countries in Africa.

At the international level we have common interests in issues such as UN Security Council reforms, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, and cyber security.

In our 10 guiding principles PM Modi has articulated that “ We will strengthen our cooperation and mutual capabilities in combating terrorism and extremism; keeping our cyberspace safe and secure; and, supporting the UN in advancing and keeping peace”.

The Indian Ocean, the third largest ocean in the world that amounts to 20% of the global oceans, over the last two decades has been facing grave maritime security challenges, especially in the form of piracy.

These daunting problems are dynamic and cross-jurisdictional. Consequently, combating them necessitates combined efforts and unified response from India, Africa and other nations along the shores of the Indian Ocean, making maritime security a crucial area of cooperation.

Our cooperation in other sectors such as education, health, information technology and skill development continues to grow, and our partnership has also expanded to new frontiers including, digital technology, blue economy and climate change.

In today's integrated foreign policy domain Africa is and must continue to remain at the centre of our radar.

Whether we look at the vast Western Indian Ocean with all its ramifications or at India's civilizational contacts with the East coast of the African continent or indeed in any other manner that conclusion is inevitable.

Therefore while the pragmatic element of our interest in Africa cannot be denied, but what is equally important is this external policies should be sustained and given proper direction by an intellectual climate.

In other words our policy goals and objectives in Africa cannot become meaningful unless we have sufficient knowledge and expertise about Africa in India.

It is in these contexts that African studies in India and promoting Indo-African intellectual understanding assumes added importance.

I would therefore like the Indian Council of World affairs to continue with its traditional focus on Africa and hold such conferences periodically and also focus in the sub regional dimensions.

Once again, I congratulate ICWA for this endeavour and extend my best wishes to all the delegates. I hope that the relationship between India and Africa continue to flourish bringing peace and prosperity to both regions.

Thank You!
Jai Hind!
