

Opening Remarks

by



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at the National Conference
on

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

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Amb TCA Raghavan, Director General of ICWA
Excellencies,
Amb Rajiv Bhatia,
Former DG of ICWA,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a great pleasure to be in your midst at the inaugural of ICWA National Conference on India-Africa Partnership in the Changing Global Order.

I thank Amb TCA Raghavan and the ICWA for inviting me to address this august gathering. I see from the programme that you have a full agenda and every aspect of our cooperation with Africa is being discussed. You have also a galaxy of speakers, who are genuine experts in their own right. I therefore keenly await the outcome of your discussions since there is much I can learn from your deliberations.

The context in which your Conference is taking place is as interesting as it is important. This context will naturally guide the priorities and prospects for, inter alia, India-Africa partnership.

Multilateralism is facing challenges around the world. Unilateralism and protectionist tendencies are rising. The fight now seems to be between multilateralism and unilateralism. And hence, it is also between preserving the status quo of multilateralism and breaking down the edifice of multilateralism. In this struggle, the call for reform is lost in the din. Those earlier calling for reform are now calling for status quo and those who had wanted status quo and opposed reform, are now abandoning this status quo. Surely there must be a middle path. And to tread this middle path is squarely in the interest of India and Africa. As Prime Minister Modi called for in BRICS, G-20 and G-7 meetings, what the world needs now is reformed multilateralism. That's the only way those who have never had a major say in the multilateral system, will now have a say. Neither status quo nor demolishing it, is good for developing countries. Developing countries need a say in the global order of today and that can come only through reformed multilateralism.

In this, Africa has probably shown the way. By adopting the Continental Free Trade Agreement in July this year, they have shown the world what reformed multilateralism can mean. They have changed the narrative in the world of trade and investment, and put themselves squarely in the path of economic progress. And as internal barriers between the African nations break down, a world of opportunities will open up for all countries around the world. In this Age of Disruptions, this Continental Free Trade Agreement has the potential to be a game changer. As it is, among the top ten countries of the world which are growing fast, half of them are African countries. These indicators are only set to get better and better.

The challenge is for India and Africa to work together to bring about this reformed multilateralism, whether in the UN and the UNSC or in other international organisations,

to change global order. This is not only in our mutual interest but in the interest of all developing countries. The BRICS Foreign Ministers recently in Rio agreed for reforming multilateral systems and it's only a matter of time when others too will see the wisdom of this path.

Another context of our discussion here is the world focus on South-South cooperation. South-South cooperation is gathering greater currency and value. It is occupying much greater space in the world of development partnership and in the changing global order. The IBSA countries took the initiative for bringing out last year a timely declaration on South-South Cooperation, and for reiterating certain essential principles of SSC. And nowhere is this more relevant than in the African context. Developing countries are already looking to partner African countries in their developmental path. In Africa's pursuance of "Africa-owned" and "Africa-led" development, it is India's endeavour to base our partnership on the principles of equality, mutual respect, solidarity and mutual benefit. Our model of cooperation with Africa is demand driven, consultative, and participative, involves local resources, builds capacity and is based on Africa's own prioritisation of its needs. As I have mentioned earlier, no South-South Cooperation can and should result in restricting the space for development or constrain the future of our countries. The challenge is to liberate the potential of Africa without seeking to constrain it. That is the touchstone for development. The challenge is also to ensure that while SSC occupies greater space in development, including in Africa, the developed countries do not take this opportunity to withdraw from their North-South Commitments.

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The next context of our discussion is the winds of change sweeping Africa, particularly in the political arena. There is greater respect and commitment to democracy and desire and action to bring about change to a more democratic polity. We have seen how African leaders have worked to ensure smooth transition respecting the will of the people. In effect, the governments are more responsive to the demands of the citizens and to the restive youth clamouring for a voice in their development and progress. A demand driven approach to development partnership will, therefore, need to be driven by the demand of the people of Africa for a change in their lives. And this is happening. Many of India's assistance now goes towards empowering the people of Africa whether it is our capacity building and training assistance or the sectors to which our developmental assistance is channeled. For example, the impact of Indian Lines of Credit for water related projects in Tanzania, including drinking water projects which have brought about a change in the lives of the common man, has led to requests from many other countries for similar projects like Malawi, Guinea etc. This equally true of requests to India to conduct sector specific training courses for country specific requirements under our ITEC programme, which spans more than 160 countries. We just had a group of 25 Permanent Secretaries from The Gambia benefiting from learning about the Indian model of good governance and administration. So democracy brings about a different set of priorities and, accordingly, the type of request for development partnership also changes.

Another context is the desire on the part of Africa to move up the value chain and leapfrog into Industry 4.0. No more is Africa satisfied with merely infrastructure projects, important as they may be. Just as India's first rocket was transported to its launching station by an Indian bullock cart, Africa also exists at many different levels. The search for bread and butter issues continues side by side with the search for modern technology that will positively impact the lives of its citizens. India has gone through that phase and in some ways still is. We have realized that development should be embraced at many levels. I think Africa is at that stage where they are embracing development at different levels. Consequently, development partnership should be versatile, technology intensive and a vehicle for sharing cutting edge technology, especially digital technology and artificial intelligence. India believes that technology is vital for developing countries to leap frog into the 4th industrial revolution, as well as directly impact positively the lives of people, especially in delivery of public services, education, health, agriculture etc. For example, most of the members of the International Solar Alliance are African nations. Another example: the first pilot e-ITEC course we conducted for two countries in Africa a few months back was on Big Data Analytics with Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras), one of the foremost centres of excellence in technology of the world. We will work with Africa to address the challenge of the knowledge, technology and digital divides, so that the 4th industrial revolution is an inclusive one.

Another important context is the changing face of security and defence in the African continent. Africa is more acutely aware now than ever before the need to combat violence, radicalization and terrorism if development has to become sustainable. India has tried to reach out to address this need over the years. We are proud of the work of Indian peacekeepers in over a dozen UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, since our first mission in Congo in 1960. Today, over 5,000 Indians serve in five peacekeeping operations in Africa. Indian women established a landmark with the first all-female Police Unit of the United Nations in Liberia. Our defence and security cooperation is growing with nations in Africa, as we work together to counter terrorism and piracy, and keep our seas secure. We have recently had many requests from African countries for Indian Military Training Teams to be deputed to their National Defence Academies. We will strive to address these requests and strengthen our mutual resolve to fight terrorism and radicalization. These are challenges we need to face together resolutely.

What I would like to underline here is that, India has been acutely responsive to the changing priorities and requirements of African countries. It is in this context that Prime Minister Modi set out the ten guiding principles for India's engagement with Africa last year. We will seek to act on each and every principle set out by him. We have already set out on this path.

In fact, I have invited the African Union and member states delegation the next week for the first ever review meeting of the commitments under India Africa Forum Summit 3, held in New Delhi in 2015. And when I was reviewing the progress with my colleagues last month, I was happy to see that out of a commitment of 50,000 slots for capacity building

over 5 years, we have done more than 40,000 already, and out of a grant commitment of USD 600 million over 5 years, we have already exceeded the target in 3 and a half years itself, and out of the Lines of Credit target of USD 10 billion, we have pledged more than USD 6 billion already. What is equally heartening is that our quality of implementation has been considerably enhanced along with the increasing pace of implementation. Fly by night operators have been eliminated and reputed companies have come in. We are expanding our ITEC programme into new and innovative areas like e-ITEC to reach larger numbers. Some of India's leading institutions like Indian Institute of Technology and other centres of excellence, both public and private, participate in this effort now. Our new tele education and tele medicine project 'eVidya Bharti e Arogya Bharti' (eVBAB) will bring India and Africa even closer. We are now getting into Trilateral Cooperation with third countries for taking up projects in Africa. This holds considerable promise though it is still at a nascent stage.

And last but not the least, our peoples are now interacting even more than before in this digital age. Mahatma Gandhi inspired a generation of great African freedom fighters. Now, Indian knowledge economy is inspiring generations of African youth and students. Indian entrepreneurs are inspiring African business community. And India's stability and democratic polity is inspiring many in Africa to emulate the Indian model. An important element of our engagement has always been our sustained connection with the People of Indian origin in Africa, who have played a key role in socio-economic development of their adopted countries. They will continue to be a living bridge.

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We have witnessed unprecedented outreach of India to Africa in the last five years. Just last month, Hon'ble Rashtrapatiji made the first ever visit by an Indian President to three countries in West Africa. Even as I speak today, our MoS for External Affairs is visiting 3 countries in West Africa.

And talking about the Global Order, India has always believed in "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" – the World is One Family. When I was discussing this concept with the then EAM, Late Smt. Sushma Swaraj, and trying to understand its relevance for the modern age, she mentioned to me that the meaning of "One Family" is far deeper than what it may appear on the surface. The concept of family is that the mother not only gives to the child what the child wants, but also gives what the child needs. So friends, as countries belonging to one family, where we engage with each other as equals and have common aspirations, let us give each other not only what we want but also what we need. That will truly make us One Family.

I thank you once again for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts and I wish all the delegates a very successful conference.

Thank you!
