



India's Africa Outreach 2016: Issues, Impact and Implications

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The year 2016 saw Africa taking centre stage in India's diplomacy. The series of high level visits undertaken by the President, Vice President and the Prime Minister of India to different regions of Africa added a new impetus to the relations. The visits covered 12 countries in different regions of Africa. The Vice President Mr Hamid Ansari visited the Arab and West African countries, Morocco, Tunisia Algeria, Nigeria and Mali. The President Mr Pranab Mukherjee made a tour to Anglophone and Francophone West African and Southern African countries, Ghana, Cote d Ivoire and Namibia. The Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi took a trip to Eastern and Southern African Indian Ocean littoral countries, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya. This unprecedented diplomatic outreach indicated India's commitment to have a sustained interaction with Africa in follow up to the successful organization of the Third India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-III) in New Delhi in October, 2015. It is significant to note that most of these visits undertaken were after a long hiatus. Particularly, in the case of West and North African countries it is seen that despite the growing economic relations, high level visits from both sides has remained the missing link in the relations. In this context the visits by the President and Vice President to the countries in the West and North African region assume immense significance. This issue brief examines all the visits undertaken by the President and the Vice President to Africa and assesses the issues, Impact and implications.

President's Visit to Ghana, Cote d Ivoire and Namibia

The President Mr. Pranab Mukherjee concluded a successful visit to Ghana, Cote d Ivoire and Namibia from 12- 18 June 2016. His visit to Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire was first ever by an Indian President while to Namibia it was the second visit of an Indian President after a gap of 21 years. These visits gave an opportunity to the Indian President to not only focus on issues of common

interest and concerns at the bilateral, regional and global level, but also to reiterate India's commitment to sustained contribution to the partnership for mutual growth and development.

President Mukherjee's tour to Ghana was marked by a blend of symbolism and substance and aimed to reinvigorate and further strengthen their warm and close bilateral relationship. He paid floral tributes at the mausoleum of Ghana's founding President and father of the nation, late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who along with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and others, founded the Non-Aligned Movement. He unveiled a bust of Mahatma Gandhi in the University of Ghana and also planted a sapling at the Flagstaff House, the Ghanaian Presidential Complex which is an iconic building constructed with Indian assistance as a mark of his first visit to the Country

On the part of Ghana there was tremendous goodwill and strong desire to further strengthen relations with India. India and Ghana signed three agreements/ MOUs and they include exemption from visa requirement for holders of Diplomatic and Official Passports, on the establishment of a Joint Commission and between the Foreign Service Institutes of the two countries. Both sides held talks and signed a Joint Statement which centred on boosting cooperation on trade and Investment, civilian nuclear energy, UNSC and capacity building.

With regard to trade and Investment the two leaders expressed satisfaction that bilateral trade and investments have been steadily growing, yet both felt that the current level of trade does not reflect the true potential and should be increased to at least US \$ 5 billion by 2020. The bilateral trade crossed US \$ 3 billion in 2015-16. India is the largest foreign investor in Ghana with more than 700 projects. Most of these projects are in the manufacturing sector. India's cumulative investments in Ghana till date have exceeded US\$ 1 billion. In his address to the Joint Business Forum, President assured that both public and private sector companies in India are enthusiastic about the opportunities in Ghana country to invest. He made a strong pitch for Indian private sector investment in Ghana, saying economic cooperation between the two countries should move beyond Government funded projects. He also said more emphasis should be given to small and medium industries as they generate employment.

In new areas Ghana sought civil nuclear cooperation with India. Ghanaian President specifically mentioned that since India is a leader in nuclear energy, they want to explore having a civil nuclear cooperation with India

Both leaders noted that international terrorism is a scourge, a threat to the entire civilized world. While India has been a victim of cross-border terrorism for a long time, Ghana is situated in an increasingly volatile region that is facing threats from ISIS and Boko Haram. The two leaders called for expanding bilateral co-operation in the field of defence and security and also called for greater exchanges between the Kofi Annan UN Peacekeeping Centre, Accra, and the Centre for UN Peacekeeping, New Delhi.

The two leaders also spoke about how they could cooperate in the global arena. In his address at the Banquets and at University of Ghana he raised the issue of Global governance and

UNSC. President Mukherjee said that at present the world order demands global governance structures that are consistent with the new challenges that confront the global community. It is a serious anomaly that India, home to every sixth citizen of the world and Africa, a vibrant hub of the global economy, still remain out of the UN Security Council.

Capacity building was another major area of focus during the visit. In view of the good utilization of India's capacity building programmes and their popularity, a number of announcements were made by President Mukherjee in capacity building and human resource development including an increase in ITEC slots from 250 to 300 and ICCR scholarships from 16 to 40 and further assistance of US \$ 1 million for the India-Ghana Kofi Annan Centre for IT excellence. The Government of Ghana thankfully acknowledged India's contribution to Capacity building initiative. It expressed its deep appreciation for India's generous developmental assistance which amounts to approximately US \$ 450 million in the last 5-6 years.

Further the need for regular and consistent high-level interaction between the Governments of Ghana and India was underlined and welcomed the setting up of an institutional framework in the form of a Joint Commission to periodically review various aspects of the multi-dimensional relationship.

Cote d Ivoire Visit

Being the first ever visit by Indian President to this Francophone country, the visit was significant in itself, in boosting bilateral relations. After years of political unrest, IMF now predicts Cote d Ivoire as one of the fastest growing economy in Africa in 2016, with growth rate of 8.5 per cent. President Mukherjee visit happening at this opportune time was a reflection of the desire on both sides to enhance the economic and development cooperation.

The visit was marked with great warmth and affection as a testimony to the tremendous goodwill that India has in the country. President Mukherjee was conferred the highest national honour, the Grande Croix Commandeur in the National Merit Order. He was presented with a symbolic key to the city of Abidjan, conferred honorary citizenship and an Advisor to the traditional chiefs, with the name 'Assito' which means 'The Example'.

Besides the symbolism the visit was also high on substance. Strengthening development and economic cooperation remained the key focus. The Cote d'Ivoire leadership acknowledged and appreciated India's developmental assistance. India has till date extended lines of credit amounting to US \$ 136.2 million in diverse fields such as agriculture processing, transport, rural electrification and transmission, fisheries etc. Another Line of Credit of US \$ 102 million for development of low-land agriculture is being processed by both. To further enhance the cooperation, a Headquarters agreement for opening of a regional office of EXIM Bank of India in Abidjan was signed during the visit. The bank shifted its office to Sudan in 1992 because of political turmoil in Côte d'Ivoire. The representative office in Abidjan shall look after Exim Bank's interest in countries namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African

Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo. it said. Besides Cote d Ivoire, the bank is located in Addis Ababa and Johannesburg in Africa.

To expand bilateral trade and economic ties and to achieve the desired target of US \$ 2 billion bilateral trade by 2020, both sides agreed on the importance of an early meeting of the Joint Commission. The First meeting of the Joint commission took place in the month of October 2016. Cote d Ivoire sought increased investments from India and President Ouattara assured an encouraging environment for investments from India, including in the areas of agro-processing, cocoa processing industry, minerals and infrastructure. President Mukherjee addressed a Joint Business Forum where agreements were signed between the CII and CEPICI as well as between Tata Motors and SUTRA for supply of 500 buses.

President Mukherjee also raised the issue of UNSC reforms, stating that 70 years are just too long a period for reforms not to take place, particularly when global geopolitics has undergone change. To this, the Cote D Ivoire President said the African Union is engaged in developing a consensus on the issue of the UN reforms. The Ivorian delegation also made a request to the Indian side to extend support for its application for non-permanent membership of the UNSC, and India promised to look into.

Both countries being victims of terrorism, also agreed to deepen cooperation in the fight against terrorism and extremism.

Namibia visit

Namibia was the last leg of President Mukherjee's tour to Africa, a country with which India enjoys longstanding, excellent and time-tested ties. During his visit Indian President interacted with President Dr. Hage Geingob, Prime Minister Dr Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, and renewed his acquaintance with founding President and father of the nation, Sam Nujoma, He addressed a Joint Session of the Namibian Parliament, wherein in his speech he highlighted the firm foundation of mutual trust and understanding on which the India- Namibian Relationship has been built.

The discussions between the two sides focused on issues related to enhancing trade, building capacity and expanding cooperation in the field of energy. Both sides noted that the bilateral trade volume and investment, albeit small, was steadily increasing and agreed to take measures to enhance trade ties. They also agreed to convene the next meetings of the Joint Trade Committee.

To enhance capacity building two MOUs/agreements were signed during the visit: (i) MOU on establishment of a Centre of Excellence in Information Technology in Namibia; and (ii) MOU between Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management (NIPAM) and Indian

Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. Further announcements were made to increase the ITEC slots from 125 to 200.

The issue of Uranium supply was one of the prominent features of the talks. Namibia reaffirmed its commitment to honour the deal signed with India in 2009 to supply Uranium for civil use and briefed the Indian side on the steps being undertaken by them in this regard. The two countries also discussed ways to further enhance co-operation in the mining and exploration of other minerals, including zinc and marble. They agreed to set up a Joint Working Group on Geology and Mineral Resources at an early date.

With reference to the International Solar Alliance (ISA) established during the COP-21 in Paris, the Indian side briefed the Namibian side on the recent developments and invited the latter to nominate a focal point for liaison with the Administrative Cell of the ISA and to forward pilot project proposals.

India also provided a humanitarian assistance grant, which include US\$ 20,000 for the Indira Gandhi Maternity Clinic, assistance of 1000 tonnes of rice for mitigating the drought situation as well as 100 tonnes of essential medicines.

Vice President's Visit to Morocco, Tunisia, Nigeria, Mali and Algeria

Vice President undertook a tour to five countries in North and West Africa this year. In the first half of the year he visited Morocco and Tunisia from May 30, 2016 to June 03, 2016. This was first high level visit undertaken by an Indian leader in 2016 as a follow up to the third India Africa Forum Summit. In the later half of the year the Vice President visited Nigeria and Mali from 26-30 September 2016 and to Algeria from 17-19 October 2016. The choice of these specific countries was deliberate as all these countries assume immense significance to India, both from the strategic and development perspective. The essential purpose remained to expand India's footprint in the region. As a follow up to many ideas discussed in the India- Africa Forum Summit, the Vice President talks with the top leadership of these countries focused on issues relating to trade, investments, food security, capacity building, terrorism, defence, culture and connectivity were discussed

Morocco Visit

Vice-President Shri Hamid Ansari concluded his visit to Morocco on 1 June 2016. This was the first visit by an Indian vice-president to Morocco in almost five decades. The last time that an Indian leader visited Morocco was in 1999 by former prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. The visit aimed to build on the partnership and explore new areas for future cooperation.

As a country, Morocco has emerged as a key player in North Africa. Given its Arab, African and European linkages it has also been playing a quiet but effective role in international security and geopolitics. India attaches high importance to this North African country. This is evident

from the fact that during the India Africa Forum Summit, despite the opposition from the African Union, India invited the Moroccan King to attend the Summit. The relations have been cordial, except for a brief period when India recognized the so-called Western Sahara Republic.

On account of sourcing phosphates from Morocco, which is critical for agriculture, the economic relations between the two countries have become substantial and there is a desire in both sides to deepen and expand economic cooperation and cultivate ties in other fields of common interest

This visit was significant in injecting dynamism to the relationship. The Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari held wide-ranging talks with the Moroccan Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane, in which they reviewed all aspects of their relationship including issues of political stability, economic development, counter terrorism and human resources development. Both sides identified new areas of cooperation relating to each other's priorities and strengths.

The Vice President also delivered a lecture on 'Accommodating Diversity in a Globalising World', at the Mohammed V University, in Rabat, wherein he was conferred a honours degree. He highlighted the contribution of Moroccan intellectuals to modern thought and challenges by taking names of Abdullah Al-Arui and Abid al-Jabri and feminist writers like Fatima Mernisi and Fatima Sadiqi.

India and Morocco signed two MoUs: (i) on cultural cooperation and (ii) on institutional training for Foreign Service officers. MoUs relating to three other areas of cooperation—Water Resources, Television Broadcasting and Education—were finalised, but could not be signed due to technical reasons.

On the economic side the Vice president conveyed to the leadership of Morocco that the Indian government would like to look at Morocco as a hub for economic activities in North Africa. Morocco sees itself as a gateway to Francophone Africa. The launch of the India-Morocco Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IMCCI) during the visit was significant, as that would accelerate the pace of economic collaboration. The bilateral trade between two countries stood at 1.26 billion dollars in 2015 with Indian exports forming roughly 25 percent of the trade volume. In recent times, Morocco has emerged as a favoured destination for investments by Indian firms in sectors other than phosphates, such as automobiles, pharmaceuticals and information technology. Indian companies have cumulatively invested more than 320 million dollars in Morocco, including in the flagship project, Indo-Maroc Phosphore SA joint venture. Tourism potential between both the countries would also get a boost with the launch of IMCCI. The tourist inflow to Morocco from India has been increasing. India lately has issued around 5000 visas to Morocco nationals for visiting India.

As regards capacity building and training, focus was placed on cooperation in areas of information technology. India is planning to set up a Centre of Excellence on Information Technology in Morocco. The centre will be setup by C-DAT, which will take special care of linking

Information Technology straight to the industry, by helping in designing curriculum specifically catering to the industry. It was also discussed that India would train Moroccans in various fields like English speaking and e-governance, including creating data base of 33 million population of Morocco like the Aadhaar scheme in India. India shared information on the benefits of Aadhaar in Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and other programmes which could be useful for Morocco. The MoU signed on Institutional training would go on to facilitate a long term training programmes for Foreign Service officers, allowing diplomats from Morocco to come to India for one year, while Indian foreign service officers visiting Morocco for the same period.

On the political front Speakers of both the Houses of Morocco called on the Vice President and he invited them to visit India. They stressed on the need for formation of a Joint Parliamentary Forum.

Enhancing culture relations was also given thrust given the cultural connect that exists between India and Morocco. The MoU related to culture exchange will not only help in promoting an understanding of each other, but also would promote the culture industry interface between two countries. The Vice President had indicated how Bollywood films might find ideal shooting locations in Morocco.

Overall, the visit added impetus to the ongoing cooperation and diversifying bilateral ties by exploring new avenues of partnership on areas of shared core priorities for mutual growth, development, peace and stability.

Tunisia Visit

The Vice President Hamid Ansari's visit was timely. At a time when extremists movements like ISIS are on rise in the region, India's emphasis on building relations with moderate and democratic regimes like Tunisia is significant. Tunisia is currently going through a post-revolution transition into a vibrant multi-party democracy. Traditionally India always has strong ties with Tunisia. Economically, Tunisia has been an important destination for India in sourcing phosphates.

During his visit the Indian Vice President held wide ranging deliberations with the top leadership of Tunisia on issues of mutual and regional interests. The Vice President praised the success of the democratic process in the country, speaking of how different political parties managed to work together in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. He said India can aid in building democratic institutions at the regional level and provide valuable insights of its own decentralization experience. The two sides discussed the issue of the spreading tide of extremism and terrorism which is a threat both countries face.

Both sides signed two MoUs one on traditional handicraft promotion and other on IT and digital economy. On capacity building India said it would train 350 Tunisian students in the next five years.

On economic aspect the Indian Vice President said that New Delhi can become an important trade and investment partner. In 2015 the annual bilateral trade reached US\$ 340.25 million. India accounts for around 50 percent of Tunisia's global phosphoric acid exports. Various Indian companies have invested in Tunisia in sectors such as automobile, electrical transmission and the joint venture company like Tunisia-India Fertilizer SA (TIFERT). Some of the companies are KEC International, Mahindra, Tata Motors, Coromandel Fertilizers Ltd and the Gujarat State Fertilizers Ltd. India is expected to promote investments into underdeveloped interior regions of Tunisia. The Vice President observed that Tunisia can be a gateway to the Francophone and Mediterranean region in the North.

Nigeria visit

The Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari's tour to Nigeria in West Africa in end of September was his second tour to Africa in five months. As the largest economy and most populous country in Africa, Nigeria carries significant weight in the region. India and Nigeria nurture a longstanding historical and cordial relationship. In the year 2007 both countries had signed the strategic partnership. This visit aimed at taking the strategic partnership to the next level, adding more content and increasing the area of cooperation between both countries.

At Abuja, Shri Ansari held talks with President Muhammad Buhari and his counterpart Yemi Osinbajo, addressed members of the Nigerian and Indian industry and also the Indian community, besides delivering a speech at the National College of Defence. From Abuja, he went to Nigeria's largest city of Lagos where he met members of the Indian community and also delivered a speech at the University of Lagos.

A MoU was signed on standards between Indian Bureau of Standards and Nigerian Standard Organisation. Besides a letter of intent was signed outlining four MOUs, which both sides would work towards including on health, customs, transfer of sentenced persons, and new and renewable energy.

The two countries held discussions on a range of issues including cooperation in the field of security, defence, ICT, culture, oil and gas, concessional credits, bilateral air services agreements, power, IT, telecom, infrastructure and fight against terrorism. Both Vice Presidents reiterated that the Abuja Declaration for Strategic Partnership of 2007 continues to provide the framework for deepening the bilateral ties.

On the economic aspect, strengthening trade and investment was the main focus. There was satisfaction on both sides that India is Nigeria's largest trading partner globally, and Nigeria is India's largest trading partner in Africa with trade reaching \$12.6 billion in 2015-16. But both sides acknowledged that there is untapped potential and strong complementarities that need to be harnessed for not only strengthening but also diversifying the bilateral trade, as at present energy comprises the major chunk of the trade. As regard to investments, \$5 billion investment in Nigerian economy was pledged by Indian business delegation, which was very much welcomed

by President Muhammad Buhari . At present over 100 Indian companies use Nigeria as their base for Africa, with over \$10 billion invested so far. Indian companies employ the largest number of Nigerians, after the Nigerian government.

Energy being the key economic component of bilateral relations, both sides agreed to strengthen the existing cooperation in oil and gas sector, and in particular to explore Government to Government agreements on oil and gas purchase from Nigeria. There was also desire expressed to strengthen and further develop cooperation in the field of renewable energy in particular solar energy. President Buhari said Nigeria would continue to expand its relationship with India in the evolution of the International Solar Alliance launched by the Indian government.

Capacity building was another key issue discussed. The Vice President of India reiterated India's continued support in technical cooperation and capacity building in sectors of interest to Nigeria, and in this connection announced an increase in training slots under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) from 200 to 300. India offered assistance in the areas of space technology and applications and remote sensing. India invited their delegation to see its capabilities and discover areas where they can collaborate with India. President Buhari said Nigeria would emulate India's agricultural model and capacity to feed its 1 billion plus population, and also export to other countries. They would want to collaborate in rice production wherein they would need rice processing technology and rice mills.

Both India and Nigeria being victims of terrorism, the issue of security and defence constituted another key aspect in the discussion. Condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations including violent extremism, both sides agreed to support the efforts of the international community to collectively fight this menace and to make concerted efforts for the early finalization and adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism at the UN. Given that networks of terror had become global they further agreed to intensify their cooperation with each other in sharing intelligence, securing cyber space, and minimizing the use of internet and social media for terrorist activities.

Both sides felt that the need for regular interaction of leaders and senior officials of both countries, and recognized the need to reactivate and hold the next Joint Commission Meeting at a mutually convenient date, in early 2017, to foster deepened relationship and expanded economic interaction between the two countries.

Mali Visit

After his successful trip to Nigeria the Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari visited Mali. It was first ever high level visit from India to the Republic of Mali. India enjoys warm and friendly relations with Mali, with bilateral trade having almost trebled in last five years amounting to US \$ 350.72 million in 2015-16. This visit was significant in filling up the visibility deficit of Indian leaders in the Francophone landlocked country Mali. The visit intended to further strengthen the

relationship between the two countries and explore new areas of cooperation to expand and diversify the bilateral relationship.

During his visit the Vice President Shri Ansari met President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, Prime Minister Modibo Keita, addressed the National Assembly in the Malian capital Bamako, CEOs of Indian origin and Indian companies and also Indians posted in the West African country under United Nations Mission.

Two MoUs were also signed between India and Mali, one on standards and the other on cultural exchange.

In his address to Mali's National Assembly, the Vice President projected India's Africa policy, and asserted it is not a transactional relationship. India's cooperation had contributed to Africa's empowerment, capacity building, human resource development, access to the Indian market, and support for Indian investments in Africa.

The talks between the Vice President and the Prime Minister of Mali covered the entire gamut of the bilateral relationship including development cooperation, terrorism and cultural interaction and identified new areas of cooperation. The new areas identified included agro, meat and cotton processing, healthcare, ICT, renewable energy particularly under International Solar Alliance and mining. Both sides agreed to reactivate the Joint Commission and convene it at an early date.

Shri Ansari assured of India's continued developmental support in the reconstruction efforts of democratic government of Mali and categorically reiterated India's support to Mali's territorial unity and integrity. India so far has extended 7 LoCs amounting to US \$ 353.60 million to Mali. 5 of LoC projects have been implemented in the areas of agriculture machinery, electrical transmission and distribution and supply of railway coaches and locomotives. A large project of US \$ 150 million for power transmission is in final stages of processing. Vice President of India urged the Government of Mali to propose fresh proposals which could be considered under the US\$ 10 billion Line of Credit announced by India during the third IAFS. India also announced gifting of vehicles and IT equipment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gifting of ambulances for general public use and assistance for setting up of English Language Learning Lab. India's assistance was gratefully acknowledged.

Terrorism is another issue where both shared their concerns and they felt the need to cooperate. Being victims of terrorism, both countries condemned it in all its forms and manifestation and decided to step up cooperation in this critical area.

India also focused on cultural cooperation, most significantly in helping to restore the city of Timbuktu whose heritage sites had been destroyed by the extremists. In this context the Memorandum of Understanding on Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) would help in strengthening cooperation and enhancing people to people relations. Condemning destruction of

historical sites, India announced cash assistance of US\$ 500,000/- towards revival of world heritage site of Timbuktu.

The Vice President also participated in the Friday prayers at the Grand Mosque with the Prime Minister and hundreds of other devout.

Overall as a follow up the third India Africa Forum Summit, the Vice President said the visit was satisfying.

Algeria visit

The Vice President's two-day visit to Algeria like other visits also came after a long gap, after 31 years. The last time that an Indian leader visited was in 1985 former Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi. This Vice President's visit aimed to rejuvenate bilateral ties and take it to the next level. Algeria also attached lot of importance to the visit. The Vice President said "it was as if India and Algeria were standing back to back so far and looking at the world, and the two nations were about to "reconnect" and "pump new life" into the bilateral relationship". The Vice president noted that for India a better equation with Algeria, the continent's largest country with an overwhelmingly Muslim population could be a positive development diplomatically. Moreover closer relations with Algeria would be useful to India in developing better links with countries of the Maghreb region.

The Vice President Shri Ansari held wide ranging discussions with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal and Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra. Both sides were willing to cooperate with India in several sectors including Energy, Security, Space and Fertilizers. Two issues were the focus of the visit: terrorism and setting up of fertilizer plant.

There was willingness on both sides on the possibility of setting up of a multibillion dollar joint venture fertilizers plant by Algeria and India in the North African country, given the phosphate reserve available in this North African country, which is estimated to be more than 5 billion tonnes. The fertilizer plant is linked to India's efforts to ensure continuing food security.

The issue of terrorism was another key agenda in the discussions. Their view on the menace of terrorism was that it was a disease for the entire world and it has to be eradicated in all forms and manifestations.

Assessment

As a refreshing departure from the past, the year 2016 has been one of the eventful years, as far as India's outreach to Africa is concerned. The series of high level visits by the President, the Vice President and the Prime Minister of India to different regions of Africa indicated India's focused regional approach that India has adopted to engage Africa .As part of this approach the visits by the Indian President and Vice President to West Africa, North Africa and Southern African

countries (comprising Anglophone, Francophone and Arab Africa) are significant in expanding India's footprints and visibility. All these visits coming after the successful third India Africa Forum Summit aimed to further consolidate India's partnership with these countries and explore new avenues for cooperation.

On the background of this enhanced diplomacy is the change that is visible in their respective territories; the resurgence of Africa interfacing with rising India. The world today is acknowledging Africa's economic prospects, its quest for democracy, demographic dividend, its pursuit for regional integration, its relentless resolve towards mitigating conflict and addressing security threats; and India's growth story of having more resource and financial leverage to expand the scope of its engagement with emerging growth poles of the world such as Africa.

The visits were substantive in terms of the gamut of issues discussed and agreements reached relating to various political, economic, development and strategic benefits. But what is more important is that these high level visits filled the missing link in India's engagement with Africa. This process will need to be sustained, regularised and cover the whole continent.

The issues and interests focused during the visits were very much determined by the countries that were carefully chosen. During the interactions between the leaders of both sides, the issues discussed reinforced some of the key aspects of India- Africa development partnership, which is centred on capacity building, trade and investments, infrastructure development, social development, agriculture and environment. In total 12 MoUs were signed during the President's and Vice Presidents visit to Africa covering areas such as capacity building and training, Visa issues and culture. In some cases some MoUs could not be signed due to technical issues. This should not happen in future.

Enhancing trade and investment linkages remain one of the key focuses in all these visits. It was felt that though economic relations were growing they were below potential. Diversifying trade basket was emphasized, particularly with countries like Nigeria where the major chunk of the trade is oil and with countries like Morocco and Tunisia the main trading commodity is phosphates. There were also talks regarding increasing Indian investments in these countries. For instance in Nigeria President Buhari appreciated \$5 billion investment in Nigerian economy pledged by Indian business delegation. In Algeria there was willingness on both sides on the possibility of setting up of a multibillion dollar joint venture fertilizer plant.

Capacity building initiatives on the part of India was another important agenda during these visits. Given the popularity and good utilization of India's capacity building programmes, a number of announcements were made in capacity building and human resource development including increase in ITEC slots and scholarships. For instance in Ghana President announced increase of ITEC slots from 250 to 300 and ICCR scholarships from 16 to 40 and further assistance of US \$ 1 million for the India-Ghana Kofi Annan Centre for IT excellence. In Namibia ITEC slots were increased from 125 to 200. In Nigeria the ITEC slots were increased from 200-300. The leaders also expressed their appreciation for the Lines of Credit that India has provided for various

development projects. The Government of Nigeria conveyed appreciation for India's concessional loan of US\$100 million extended for three power projects in Nigeria. The Cote d'Ivoire leadership acknowledged and appreciated India's developmental assistance. India has till date extended lines of credit amounting to US \$ 136.2 million in diverse fields such as agriculture processing, transport, rural electrification and transmission, fisheries etc. Building on the \$10 billion dollar LoCs committed during the third IAFS, these visits also saw India offering fresh lines of Credit for supporting capacity building and infrastructure development in Africa.

Agriculture and food security which forms an important aspect of India - Africa partnership figured seriously in the discussions held during the visit. Nigeria for instance was very keen in emulating the agricultural model of India to feed its huge population, and also export to other countries. They would want to collaborate in rice and pulses production. In Cote d'Ivoire reference was made to Lines of Credit of US \$ 102 million for development of low-land agriculture.

Enhancing cooperation in strategic and geopolitical issues relating to terrorism, security, and defence and UNSC reforms was also laid emphasis in all these visits. Rise of terror threats and need for UNSC reforms particularly when global geopolitics has undergone change, necessitating proactive cooperation was discussed with the leaders of the countries visited. In the countries visited, India's case for a permanent seat in the reformed Security Council, is well understood and appreciated though none of the Joint Statements that were released made a reference to it. Cooperation on countering terrorism was discussed with regard to sharing intelligence and securing cyber space.

There were new areas that were identified for cooperation keeping in view the preferences and priorities of countries concerned and they are renewable energy, support for solar alliance, nuclear energy and space technology. Ghana expressed its keen desire to collaborate in civil nuclear energy. With Namibia the issue of Uranium supply was one of the prominent features of the talks. Namibia reaffirmed its commitment to honour the deal signed with India in 2009 to supply Uranium for civilian use.

The impact of these visits was quite discernible as evident from the extensive media coverage from both sides. It showed how much importance India attaches to the partnership with Africa for mutual development and growth. The scale of these visits to carefully selected countries from different regions imparted a fresh momentum to the vibrant India -Africa relationship. There was recognition in both sides that the leaders need to meet at regular intervals for speedy implementation of various projects and reactivate the Joint Commissions Meeting to review and have a sustained focus on timely completion of the projects started and implementation of the agreements reached.

With this eventful year having ended the question remains what next. Looking ahead in 2017, what is needed now is while keeping up the momentum in the engagement, it is time to consolidate the agreements reached and announcements made. Regular visits at least at the Minister level may be undertaken. Equally important would be high level visits from Africa

providing an opportunity for the African leaders to see India's potential and identify areas of partnership. But at the same time implementation has to be given emphasis, as this has been the major concern in this partnership. A monitoring mechanism was put in place at the IAFS-III declaration and the process needs to work if the Partnership has to attain its true potential.

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