

Opening Statement

by

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at

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at

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Dr. Antonio Missiroli, Director, EUISS; Dignitaries; Distinguished members of EU and Indian delegations; Ladies and Gentlemen

Yesterday we began with an elegant and productive event when the publication entitled *The EU-India partnership: time to go strategic?* was launched, marking an important milestone in our joint work for the past three years (2009-11). This morning we inaugurate a new chapter through our IVth Forum. Perhaps we can now get to the brass-tacks and start focussing on our mutually agreed Agenda that envisages four separate sessions of discussions on: ‘Convergent Strategy and Security Issues’, ‘Convergences and Divergences in Non-Traditional Security and Development Issues’, ‘Cooperation in Global Economic Governance’, and ‘Enhancing India-EU Strategic Partnership’.

2. We meet this year in the backdrop of a difficult international and political situation, EU’s continuing struggle to tackle its economic and financial problems, especially in the Euro zone, and India’s unfolding endeavours to play a prominent role at the international stage even as it advances decisively to deepen the process of economic reform and inclusive governance. India-EU Strategic Partnership, launched in 2004 and evolving since then under the broad contours of the Joint Action Programme (JAP) that began in 2005, makes it essential for us to review key geo-strategic and political questions before evaluating the more traditional as well as newer areas of our broad-ranging cooperation.

3. The North Africa and West Asia region - or what you call Middle East - continues to experience weighty consequences of a historic phenomenon, the Arab Spring. The entire arch of the region stretching from Libya through Tunisia and Egypt to Syria, Jordan, Bahrain and Yemen has been affected in a varying manner. As we view it, this development has many positive and a few negative facets. India welcomes the rise of democracy and accountable governments in areas where they were absent earlier. With vital stakes in the region relating to our energy security, trade, investment and remittances and the safety of our large expatriate community, India earnestly hopes that the process of change is marked by non-violence and peaceful means, without jeopardising basic stability. The reverse seems to be happening in Syria today, with the crisis broadening its impact on the region, especially in relation to Turkey. Many in India have

serious difficulty as well as questions about EU member-states' approach and particularly actions of some of them who advocate and practice direct intervention. We are ready to listen to you and debate with you on this sensitive matter.

4. Moving closer to home, Afghanistan poses another serious worry as the drawdown of the international troops in 2014 approaches. Various stakeholders need to play their role scrupulously in ensuring a stable and peaceful transition. International community has undertaken many commitments; this is the time to act, to improve delivery and implementation. EU and India also need to work together to counter and curb those forces that are still committed to hurting interests of peace, security, democracy and development in Afghanistan. We should also examine developments in Iran that affect both our sides, even as an important divergence continues to characterise our approaches on this vital issue. On the broad questions of security, terrorism, piracy and maritime security in the Indian Ocean and the concept of Non-Traditional Security, our interlocutors in EU are broadly on the same page as us. We should also discuss the situation in East Asia where important power dynamics are at play. The need is to go into details and craft some convergence. How can our policy makers achieve greater cooperation in future?

5. India is engaged in defining its role in an increasingly multi-polar world. Hence the issue of UN reform, especially the expansion and democratisation of UN Security Council, matters much to us. Some progress seems to have occurred of late in the text-based intergovernmental negotiations, but are we anywhere near our goal? In this context, EU's role is critical, first in terms of crafting its own internal consensus on this issue and then of extending unambiguous support to India's case for a permanent seat in the Security Council. Reform of international economic governance institutions deserves a high priority as well. Is EU willing to move in the desired direction at a satisfactory speed?

6. On issues of trade, investment and economic cooperation – the very heart of India-EU engagement in earlier decades, our dialogue will have to centre on progress - or lack of it - in finalisation of the Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA). Both sides are committed to it but are still unable to secure it. Is this due to purely economic reasons or are even political factors becoming relevant now? BTIA is the vital building block of our Comprehensive

Partnership. Therefore, the sooner we could move to fructify it, the better it will be for our relationship. Finally, the whole package of issues relating to environment and climate change, energy, science and technology too need to be examined carefully by us. We should review progress in recent years, identify constraints and remedies, and also consider new cooperative measures, wherever possible.

7. To sum up, it is evident that both India and EU have major stakes in the changing world. Their relations at the global level and bilateral level are multi-faceted and have diversified over the years. Both partners would benefit from an enhanced partnership, striving to cover new vistas and addressing common challenges together. I am confident that we would continue the past tradition of this Forum to be both candid and constructive, and that our dialogue will be driven by the motivation to suggest ideas and recommendations that reinforce this partnership. Let us make it a two-way conversation that empowers us to help policy makers fulfil their responsibilities more effectively.
