



**Indian Council of World Affairs**

Sapru House, Barakhamba Road

New Delhi

**ICWA Sponsored**

**Event Report**

**on**

**Fourth India-Africa Academic Conference**

**‘India-West Africa: A Dynamic  
Relationship and Emerging Trends’**

**at**

**La-Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Accra**

**October 14-15, 2013**

## **1. BACKGROUND**

As part of the Track II dialogue process of the Second India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) – II, a two-day academic conference on “India-West Africa: A Dynamic Relationship and Emerging Trends” was held by the Indian Council for World Affairs (ICWA), at La-Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Accra on October 14-15, 2013.

The Conference aimed at

- Bringing together Indian and West African academics, researchers, policy makers, analysts and consultants to share their views and perspectives on issues relating to India-West Africa partnerships in the wider context of growing Indo-Africa relations.
- Promoting collaboration of academic institutions from India and West Africa to undertake joint projects and research on areas of mutual interest.

A seven member delegation of diplomats and analysts represented ICWA in the conference.

The members include:

Ambassador Niranjana Desai, *President, Osian's-Connoisseurs of Art Pvt Ltd,*

Ambassador Shamma Jain, *Joint Secretary, ICWA,*

Prof Mohammad Gulrez, *Aligarh Muslim University,*

Mr Manish Chand, *Editor-in Chief, India Writes,*

Ms Ruchita Beri, *SRA, IDSA,*

Dr Nivedita Ray, *Research Fellow, ICWA,*

Dr Sandipani Dash, *Research Fellow, ICWA*

About 30 experts from West African region, drawn from areas such as strategic affairs, foreign relations, security, policy, education, banking, finance, business and Indian Diaspora, presented papers on issues pertaining to the five thematic areas of the conference. Besides the experts, a large number of academics, policy makers, practitioners, media and civil society contributed to the debate and discussions in the conference.

The conference was inaugurated by H.E.Ms Hannah S. Tetteh, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Shamma Jain gave her opening remarks and Shri Jeeva Sagar, High

Commissioner of India to Ghana presented his welcome remarks. The keynote address was delivered by Ambassador (Retd) Niranjana Desai.

The Conference focused on five important areas (a) India-West Africa: Towards an Enduring Partnership (b) Enhanced Economic Engagement (c) India-West Africa Development Partnership: Past Experiences & Future Prospects (d) Multilateral & Regional Engagements (e) India-West Africa: What the Future Holds?

The speakers for various sessions of the conference are the following:

### **Inaugural Session**

Ambassador Shamma Jain, JS, ICWA  
Shri Jeeva Sagar, High Commissioner of India, Ghana  
Ms Hannah S. Tetteh, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ghana  
Ambassador Niranjana Desai, President, Osian's –Connoisseurs of Art Pvt Ltd

### **Session I**

Prof. Haruna Yakubu, VC, University for Development Studies, Ghana  
Mr. Nuku Kamasa Quashie, Director Asia & Pacific Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ghana  
Prof. Abednego Edho Ekoko, Delta State University, Abraka Nigeria  
Ms. Ruchita Beri, Senior Research Associate, Institute of Defence Studies & Analysis

### **Session-II**

Nana Appiagyee Dankawoso I, Second Vice President, Ghana National Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
Mr. Ajit Kumar, Chief General Manager, EXIM Bank India  
Mr. Manish Chand, Editor in Chief, India Writes  
Mrs. Mawuena Dumor Trebarh, CEO, Ghana Investment & Promotion Centre, Accra, Ghana  
Mr. Mukesh Ranjan, EIC, TATA Steel, West Africa  
Mr. Donal Gwira, Head of Corporate Communication & External Affairs, Airtel Ghana

### **Session-III**

Prof. Monie Captan, Adjunct Professor, IR, University of Liberia  
Ms. Dorothy K. Trebah, Director General, Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre for Excellence in ICT, Ghana  
Prof. Mohammad Gulrez, Director South African and Brazilian Studies, Aligarh Muslim University

#### **Session-IV**

Ambassador James E.K. Aggrey-Orleans, Former High Commissioner for Ghana to UK Consultant, African Centre for Economic Transformation, ACCRA

Mr. Emmanuel Doni-Kwame, Managing Director, World Trade Centre, Accra

Dr. Sandipani Dash, Research Fellow, ICWA

Dr. Nivedita Ray, Research Fellow, ICWA

#### **Session V**

Mr Rajesh Thakkar, Member of Executive Committee, Indian Association of Ghana

Mrs. Soni Valecha, President, Indian Women Association of Ghana

## **2. CONFERENCE SESSIONS**

### **Inaugural Session**

In her opening remarks Ambassador Shamma Jain welcomed the participants on behalf of Director General ICWA. Highlighting ICWA's commitment to the Second India –Africa Forum Summit's dialogue process, she noted that the conference was an effort to engage for a comprehensive and focused debate on issues relating to partnership between India and West Africa. She underscored the emerging significance of Ghana as the gateway to West Africa. Characterizing the engagement as consultative and non-prescriptive, she elaborated upon India's multidimensional engagement with West Africa in particular and Africa in general, in the bilateral, regional and continental levels. Ambassador Jain drew attention to the phenomenal rise in India-West Africa trade & investment partnerships; developmental cooperation initiatives undertaken by India, including capacity building, lines of credit, and human resource development programmes and Pan Africa E-network project; India's contribution to peacekeeping efforts under the UN mandate and Indian diaspora linkages. Emphasizing upon the strong relationship at the political leadership level, she stated that the steady exchange of ministerial visits have driven the burgeoning engagement between the two sides.

Welcoming the participants and delegates from India and West African countries, H.E. Shri Jeeva Sagar highlighted the importance of the conference as a platform for free and frank discussion on issues and challenges concerning India and West Africa. He said that Ambassador Jain's comprehensive statement had set the tone for the discussion. He noted

that the partnership between India and Africa should ultimately aim at qualitative transformation in lives of the people between both regions and enhance people to people contact. He further stressed that the conference should have a frank discussion so that actionable policy recommendations are put forth to enhance the partnership.

Inaugurating the conference H.E.Hannah Tetteh, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ghana highlighted the common heritage and mutuality of interest between India and Africa. In the context of Ghana, the Minister stated that the foundations of India-Ghana cooperation had already been laid, with the arrival of first Indians in Ghana in 1890 and establishment of the first Indian company in 1919. She urged for an increased collaboration between India and Africa, to fight against poverty and the scourge of terrorism. She also observed that as a response to the changing world, there is a need to put a structure to the evolving and dynamic partnership, in order to have a focused interaction. Stressing on the need to enhance cultural ties, the Minister spoke about immense possibilities of cooperation between film industries from India and West Africa, which would help in understanding each other better and improve dissemination of African stories and narratives.

Ambassador Niranjana Desai, in his keynote address, outlined that though India's engagement has been stronger with East and Southern Africa compared to West Africa, due to historical, geographical and other realities, yet in the post independence period the terms of engagement between India and West African nations have witnessed exponential growth with many benchmarks. He, however, pointed out that India-West Africa partnership has yet to achieve its full potential and attributed this to many deficits. He drew attention to the yawning knowledge gap on both sides and general popular perceptions of each other being based on colonial stereotypes. Ambassador Desai therefore called for Governments on both sides to promote Indian studies in African universities and vice versa. While taking note of the growing engagement at political and economical level, he highlighted that contacts at academic, cultural, civil society, and people-to-people levels have hardly increased in proportionate terms. To catalyse this dialogue, he noted, there is need to set up well-oiled Track II mechanisms at regional levels. Notwithstanding this caveat, Ambassador Desai observed that the more than 60-year engagement between independent India and West Africa has demonstrated both continuity and change. The nuanced change has always been in

response to new challenges and needs, which he viewed, is taking the relationship to a new level.

### **Session I: India-West Africa: Towards an Enduring Partnership**

The panelists reflected upon the existing ties and cooperation potential between India and West Africa.

*Mr. Nuku Kamasa Quashi*, noted that there is a qualitative transformation in the content of the trade from the global South and India-West Africa partnership, based on mutuality of interests, is on an upward trajectory. However, there is a need to explore new ways to sustain the partnership and resolve the challenges. India is a largest investor in Ghana, next to China, and it has 23 regional projects in place. Regional organization such as ECOWAS can be a principle vehicle to consolidate partnerships, he emphasized. One of the crucial ways forward he suggested was encouragement of free movement of goods and services and promotion of people to people contacts. He mentioned that focus must be placed on ICT, renewable energy as much needed areas of cooperation.

*Prof Abednego Edho Ekoko* examined the security environment of West Africa, and emphasized the evolving concept of security from its restricted militaristic contraption to the phenomenon of human security. Human security, he said, is related to national security and it is about development and people. Poverty is a threat to national security he stressed. Giving a holistic perspective about security, he highlighted about the impact of climate change on water, food, and energy security and its consequential effects in the sub-region. He also drew attention to the challenges of international criminal organizations in the sub-region and the menace of maritime insecurity, especially in the Gulf of Guinea on one hand and the incidence of global terrorism. Finally he raised the critical issue concerning application of “Indian model/template” to West development process in West Africa/ Africa, contextualizing African conditions and African world view.

*Ms Ruchita Beri* mentioned that while anti-colonial solidarities laid the foundation for this partnership, the new priorities are largely shaped by rapid economic growth in India and by efforts towards democratization, growth and stability in West Africa. The West African region has become an import source of energy and India is turning towards West Africa in

its efforts towards diversifying its oil imports. Apprising about the growing security threats in the region she said that India has been contributing to peace and security efforts in the region. However security needs to be approached in a holistic manner. She suggested an institutionalized dialogue between India and West Africa to enhance the partnership.

### **Discussion**

Two pertinent points were raised during the discussion session regarding India –West Africa partnership. 1) Whether by asking India to help with its model in Africa, is in a way presupposing a donor-recipient dependency framework, while the current mode of engagement is based on the spirit of partnership.2) Whether India with its developmental experience, would work together with West African countries to try and evolve a new development model, which needs to be embedded in the West African context.

### **Session II: Enhanced Economic Engagement**

The panelists identified prospects and challenges in the India-West Africa economic relations.

*Mr Ajit Kumar* outlined the catalyst role played by the EXIM Bank for investments in West Africa, which includes a comprehensive range of financing, advisory and support programmes to promote and facilitate country's international trade and investment. He emphasized that the core contribution of EXIM Bank to India-West Africa partnership has been extending loans to Indian companies for investments in the region and facilitating various collaborative programmes. Its financial programmes in West Africa are through Lines of Credit on behalf of and at the behest of the Government of India, support for Project Exports, finance for JVs overseas, Buyer's credit, Supplier's Credit, and Marketing Advisory Services, among others.

*Mr. Manish Chand* opined that though India's relations with West Africa have been growing incrementally in the economic and diplomatic sphere, yet there is a crucial element missing, which is culture with Capital C. He highlighted that the diplomatic relations would have better chances of prospering if the two partners are attuned to each other's cultural values and systems. Besides culture, he also drew attention to the glaring deficits in knowledge and

popular exchanges between India and West Africa as well as the parallel gaps in the cultural cooperation between India and West Africa. However, he noted that there is a solid base to build upon in this area as both India and West Africa are home to vibrant multifarious cultural industries. While West Africa has well-developed film and music industries, India has the world's largest film industry and eclectic cultural and performance traditions to draw upon.

*Mrs. Mawuena Dumor Trebarh* spoke about Ghana's investment potential and opportunities for India to explore. Highlighting Ghana's investment attractiveness, she outlined that the country has a business friendly environment, sound macroeconomic and political stability with 14.4 per cent economic growth and provides generous investment incentives. She noted that India has been contributing to Ghana's development process, by providing assistance in setting up projects in the spirit of South-South cooperation, through provision of Lines of Credit and grants. Indian Government's extension of Lines of Credit to Government of Ghana for undertaking various developmental projects, amount to US\$ 228.73 million. The exchange of business delegations in recent years have led to an increase in investments by Indian companies in Ghana in sectors like construction, manufacturing, trading, services and tourism and in areas such as steel, cement, plastics, pharmaceuticals, ICT, agro-processing and agricultural machinery, electrical equipments, chemicals, etc. She put forth the investment potential of Ghana in the areas of oil & gas, energy, infrastructure, agriculture and agri-business, tourism, manufacturing and services.

*Mr. Mukesh Ranjan* highlighted the contributions of TATA to the development and growth of West African region. He spoke about the TATA Steel's strategy towards sustainable development of the region through its Corporate Social Initiatives (CSR). He stated that the CSR initiatives of TATA were some of the best practices, which has made TATA popular in the local community. Such strategy aims at having a long term stake in the region.

*Mr. Donald Gwira* stated that Airtel Ghana is a leading telecommunications company in Ghana and is driven by the aim of connecting communities across Ghana by providing affordable, relevant and innovative mobile services to all. He detailed out Airtel's contributions to the development and growth of West African region. He noted that CSR



initiatives pursued by the Airtel supported the communities and touched the common lives in the West African region.

### **Discussion**

Discussion revolved around the issue of trade and investments cooperation and sustainable development. It was pointed out that energy sector would most likely provide sustained scope of partnership between India and Africa, as other external players such as the US, might not find Africa as a critical source of energy, given their discovery of Shale gas. Regulatory mechanisms need to be put in place in order to facilitate the operation of the private sector to the mutual benefit of both regions. Dutch disease resource curse syndrome was also reflected in the context of providing equitable access to revenues generated from hydrocarbons.

### **Session III: India-West Africa Development Partnership: Perspectives**

The panellists analyzed development partnerships between India and West Africa by flagging capacity building and human resource development programmes, technological cooperation initiatives, and common concerns for sustainable development.

*Prof. Haruna Yakubu* contextualized India-West Africa development partnership under the wider framework of South-South Cooperation. He examined the extent to which political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical co operations have worked in recent times, in the face of historically fashioned global trade, investment, production, and financial regimes that remain fundamentally biased in favour of the economic and strategic interests of the core capitalist North. He regarded South-South Cooperation as an appropriate modality for advancing equitable national development agendas, taking advantage of the specific strengths and conditions of limitless opportunities in many countries of the Global South.

*Prof. Monie Captan* recognized India as a key leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, promoting a very strong international political policy for advancing the interests of developing countries. Such experience and role positions India to play a new role for developing countries, by advocating a new international economic order. India-ECOWAS economic relations, he recognized, have the capacity to provide a strategic opportunity to

promote sustainable inclusive economic growth that can facilitate new terms of trade regime at the South-South level. This relation would consequently structure a new trade and investment paradigm that could become the preference of developing countries globally. Envisioning increase in opportunities, he said that an India-ECOWAS economic relationship can be contextualized to define not only growth, but mutual development objectives.

*Ms. Dorothy K. Trebah* perceived the evolution of India-Africa engagement through post-independence political ideological alignment, South-South Cooperation narrative, principle of Non-Aligned Movement, economic diplomacy, investment for resources, and the unidirectional flows of capacity transfers. She recognized today's India as an important player in the global knowledge economy and the major incubator of models for economic development. She also projected India as a scientific and research power house, with a huge middle class. She reflected on the major intra-state disparities in India. She spoke about India's leadership on global issues e.g. environment, intellectual property rights. In the spirit of South-South cooperation, she reiterated Gandhi's famous expression, "The commerce between India and Africa would be one of ideas and services not of manufactured goods."

*Prof. Mohammad Gulrez* viewed the India-West Africa development partnership premised on solidarity, goodwill and vibrant relationship between India and Africa. He made a distinction between the premise of India's development partnership from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) pattern of aid programme in Africa. He stated that a major focus area of India's development partnership is to develop capacity building in the field of education, in giving scholarships to African students to study in India and providing technical training, under ITEC, as well as helping in human resource development. He noted that with high growth rates in India since 2003, there has been phenomenal increase in its LOCs estimated to be over US\$ 9 billion, for Africa. He added that India is providing crucial support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) through a LOC of US\$ 200 million.

## **Discussion**

Discussion focused primarily on capacity building. Attention was drawn to encourage movement of Indian students to West African countries, to undertake joint research on critical areas, like energy and climate change, and create new models suited to the local conditions.

Vision of leadership was also discussed in the context of building self reliance through prioritising education. India's capacity building cooperation with West African countries in the context of security, particularly relating to military training programs to enhance the defence capacity should be given greater focus. It was also noted that India's Female Police Unit in Liberia, as effective security provider, has inspired many Liberian and West African women

#### **Session IV: Multilateral & Regional Engagements**

The panellists threw light on India-West Africa engagement through regional and multilateral platforms.

*Mr. Emmanuel Doni-Kwame* said that while the ECOWAS countries and emerging economies can tap into immense opportunities, there are still challenges for the development of these countries. Key among them, according to him, are youth unemployment, over concentration of investment in traditional resource-rich primary sectors in ECOWAS countries. Prospects for transfer of technology and access to finance are good. He said that ECOWAS countries can tap into the increased demand for its products from the emerging economies. The relation, however, should be somewhat different from the relations it has had with the developed countries, where the sub-region served as providers of raw materials only.

*Dr. Nivedita Ray* discussed the regional approaches to security challenges in West Africa and India's Interface in this process. The weakness of regional security cooperation, she argued, has been a key factor in the gradual instability in the West Africa region, over the past decade. Presenting a historical analysis of the current security challenges in the region, including, military coups, unconstitutional changes of government, Islamic radicalism, terrorism and maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, she pointed out that the local and regional efforts to mitigate these challenges have been adequate. While organized crime, extremist activity, and cross border movements of arms and fighters have strengthened linkages among non –state actors in the region, state policies so far have failed to keep up, she added. There is a need for a new framework for regional cooperation, wherein the initiatives of regional states, regional organisations and external actors are in tandem to address the complex security challenges. India, though has contributed to efforts of

maintaining peace and stability of the region, yet it needs to play a more proactive role, given its growing trade and investment linkages with the region.

*Dr. Sandipani Dash* construed regional economic integration process as key to structural transformation in West Africa. He stated that under the process of globalization, the mining and agricultural potential of the region drive its economic resurgence, stressing the need for infrastructure development. He said that the infrastructure projects are important for linking West African countries, thereby facilitating intra-regional trade and investment synergy. He noted that the pursuit for regional integration becomes a priority for the West African countries. He opined that the region's quest for favourable capital investment and intermediate, cost-effective technology for revamping its economy coincides with India's requirement of resource and market to sustain its rising economic growth. While India emerges as a leading resource and market seeking actor, majority of West African countries have become new investment destinations. The common priority for resource security and agricultural rejuvenation, he considered, has created scope for collaboration between India and West Africa in the structural transformation of the latter's mineral and agricultural resource sectors.

### **Discussion**

The major points discussed were related to ECOWAS, BRICS and regional security. Introspection was made by local speakers regarding removal of tariff barriers and achieving a true common market through the implementation of its Common External Tariff (CET) and Economic Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS). The need for trade and commerce synergy among ECOWAS member countries was emphasized. BRICS agenda was conceived as a response to the West dominance of global trade and economy. The West African countries should engage with the BRICS countries, keeping in mind their comparative advantage, such as China for manufacturing, Russia for energy, India for ICT, Brazil for agriculture. CSR initiatives by private companies, for addressing local resentments, was also reflected upon in the context of responding to regional security risks.

### **Concluding Session: India-West Africa: What the Future Holds?**

This was an interesting session as it explored future possibilities of cooperation in different areas. While keeping in view the existing partnerships between India and West Africa, in terms of their common heritage, historical evolution, south-south solidarity, strengths and weaknesses, mutuality of interests, and sharing of indigenous experiences, it was observed that new dimensions need to be added, which can take the existing relationship to a higher level. It was felt that the existing relationship should move beyond trade. Focus should be on capacity building and skill development that would benefit locals in getting employed, addressing growing security challenges such as terrorism and piracy, ensuring food security through enhancement of agriculture productivity, building institutional linkages, identifying think tanks and building linkages to promote dialogue for strengthening relationship. The need to create enduring stakes in the region was very emphatically put forward.

The role and status of Indian Diaspora in Ghana and West Africa region, which is a vibrant community and highly respected for their immense contributions to the development of the region, was reflected upon. It was observed that it has the potential to play an important role in strengthening India-West Africa relations both culturally and economically.

India's comparative advantage in technology development was noted and it was expressed that West African countries can benefit significantly from it. It was observed that scholarship schemes that see a greater enrolment of ECOWAS students at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and stronger relations between Bangalore based IT companies and their West African counterparts would enable West African countries to gain a foot-hold in technology development and processing.

In the social sector such as health, it was highlighted that this industry must continue research into areas that Western producers will not venture into, due to market considerations and African herbal and traditional medicine can offer major opportunities for research collaboration and market development.

In the higher education sector, it was felt that India's current status as a research power house should be exploited to achieve socio-economic growth. Research interests need to be jointly defined at continental, regional and national levels. There is a requirement for establishing

and enhancing existing linkages with research institutes and academia of India and West Africa.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The evolving and dynamic partnership need to be placed under an institutionalized framework and structure, in order to have a focused and engaged interaction.
- Setting up Indian studies in West African universities and African studies in Indian Universities would enrich understanding of each other.
- India's development cooperation initiatives need to be given wider publicity. Indian Missions in African countries should disseminate information about these programs not only posting them on the websites, but also publicize them through other channels of communication. This would enable a cross section of local people to be aware of these programs and take advantage of them.
- Focus must be placed on ICT and renewable energy, as much needed areas of cooperation. To this end joint research needs to be undertaken in West Africa by scientists/experts from both sides.
- To have an increased presence in the region, Indian companies should participate in technical assistance, in terms of project preparation and advisory services, in the projects funded by multilateral institutions, such as World Bank and Africa Development Bank.
- Indian companies could explore partnership with local entrepreneurs and local investment agencies, which could attract funds from multilateral investment agencies.
- There are opportunities for the private sector to invest in areas such as e-learning services, private tertiary education, infrastructure services, technical and vocational education and schools for the physically challenged.
- There is immense scope for collaboration between film industries from India and West Africa.
- An India-West Africa Culture and Knowledge Fund could be created on a PPP basis, having a broad-based stake-holding to enhance cultural relations.
- A pan-region based cultural centre like India-West Africa Cultural Centre could be set up, which can act as a facilitator of interactions between leading cultural institutions of India and West Africa. The cultural centre could also act as an incubator of new

initiatives and ideas for deepening linkages between high culture, popular culture and media industries of the two sides. It should be jointly funded and financed.

- West African countries have vibrant media platforms, but there is limited flow of information and media analyses between India and the sub-region. An India-West Africa Media Forum, if created, will act as an information and knowledge bridge between the two sides.
- Power generation remains a key area of partnership, in order to sustain the growing business engagement.
- Major development constraints, especially road and power infrastructure coupled with capacity deficits and regulatory inefficiencies should be addressed. Extractive industries should program infrastructure development in their investment programs.
- Public Private Partnerships are key instruments for fast tracking infrastructure development, especially in the context of competing social demands on scarce resources.
- Social commitments should be made the benchmark of responsible investment, especially as regards to extracting depletable resources.
- Bilateral and multilateral trade agreements under India-ECOWAS trade relations should enable Indian companies to move toward value addition and local content development, enhancing West African manufacturing capability.
- Collaboration between African and Indian Chambers of Commerce should be promoted to facilitate greater private sector engagements and business to business transactions.
- Pharmaceutical industry must continue research into areas, such as African herbal and traditional medicine, that Western producers will not venture into due to market considerations.
- Scholarship schemes that see a greater enrolment of ECOWAS students at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and stronger relations between Bangalore based IT companies and their West African counterparts would enable West African countries to gain a foot-hold in technology development and processing.
- Trade relations could be structured around the provision of Indian expertise at West African Universities. India has a comparative advantage in science, math- and

technology-educated individuals. Many of these individuals could take up professorships at several West African Universities.

- Research interests between India and Africa should be jointly defined at AU, REC and national levels
- The existing partnership between research institutes and academia in India and Africa should focus on skill development.
- Broad guidelines are required to be set out for proposal evaluations and methods for tracking successful completion of the projects especially supported by LoCs.
- There is a need for a new framework for regional cooperation to address the evolving complex security challenges in the West African region, wherein the initiatives of regional states, regional organisations and external actors are in tandem.
- India, though has contributed to the UN efforts of maintaining peace and stability of the region and provided military training, yet currently it needs to play a more proactive role to ensure peace and stability in the region, given its growing trade and investment linkages with the region.

