

Remarks

by

Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia

Director General, ICWA

at

'Sixth India-EU Forum'

at

Brussels

11 May 2015

Dr. Antonio Missiroli, Director, EUISS, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am pleased to note that, since 2008, the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) and the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) have been successfully holding the academic interactions after a regular interval under the auspices of India-EU Forum. As the key element of India-EU track-II diplomacy, the Forum has been proactive in shaping a vibrant intellectual discourse on evolving interface between India and the EU. It appears to be important to highlight that the Forum has achieved remarkable success in academic exchanges, raising public debates and involving a wide range of people from multicultural societies and intellectual community of India and Europe. Consequently, the Forum considerably contributes to strengthening the 'normative base' of India-EU strategic partnership. Personally speaking, I led three ICWA delegations to the Forum, and found them immensely fruitful and satisfying.
2. Historically, the foundation of India-EU relations was laid down on the shared values of democracy and freedom and mutuality of interests. It has evolved with the aspirations of one and a half billion people for peace, liberty and a sustainable approach to prosperity. New Delhi was among the first countries, which recognized the potential of unique experiment of political and economic integration in the Europe. The idea of modern India, which encompasses principles of democracy, peace, scientific advancement, inclusive development, secularism and pluralism, resonates with core objectives of European integration process.
3. Today, a wider debate on India's impressive economic success, scientific revolution from IT to space technology, and defence preparedness is taking place across the world. After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to European countries, attention grew on how policy of 'Link West' will facilitate socio-economic transformation of the second largest populous country of the world. Then, it is pertinent to remember the challenges of early 1990s, when India took a turn towards a different path of economic system and a new course of development. Both

India and the EU responded to the challenges with a wide range of measures towards greater political interaction, and deeper economic and commercial engagement. New hope was generated in India-Europe multilayered interactions. The institutional framework was formulated to guide the relationship. The visionary measures of difficult times have yielded positive results and New Delhi and Brussels elevated their partnership to the strategic level. How EU would connect with India's current rejuvenation is being watched closely.

4. After a decade of strategic partnership, there is a common feeling on both sides that India-EU strategic partnership is yet to realise its full potential and is 'underperforming'. India and the EU are not able to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution on several issues of mutual importance. They could not develop synergies on the global issues; its implications transcend the national boundaries. Protectionist measures strained the core of our relationship. Political interaction at the highest level seems to have stagnated. Therefore, while India-Europe interactions remain active 'bilaterally', they are in a limbo 'regionally.'
5. After outlining the specific challenges, we do notice that the core of the partnership still remains intact. Economic importance of the EU is well recognised by the foreign policy establishment not only in terms of trade and investment flows, but also the EU's role in shaping the global financial order. Prime Minister Modi's visit to Germany and France highlighted a simple fact: a vibrant 'Link West' policy would effectively complement the 'Act East' policy' to facilitate the country's economic development, technological advancement and political stature on the international arena.
6. The emphasis on 'Democracy, Demography and Demand' provides a judicious blend of the present and future of India's economic diplomacy. These three determinants are also the defining factors of future India-EU relations. The growing middle class in the country seeks more global exposure in areas of education, skill development, professional activities, tourism, etc. The European economy would be greatly

benefitted if it adopts a positive approach with a viable business model in harnessing the business potential and shaping the aspirations of the Indian society.

7. The 'Link West' policy has wider connotations. We believe that strategic issues and current security and humanitarian challenges from West Asia to Afghanistan are also crucial in the relationship with Europe. India would also be looking for cooperation in addressing the regional humanitarian and security challenges. India is thus keen to expand this relationship beyond economic engagement. Support of the EU member states, France and the UK, is valuable in the quest for permanent membership of the UNSC. India has long been a victim of international terrorism. Multicultural societies of India and Europe are anxious to rise to the challenge of extremism, fundamentalism and international terrorism. We need to find synergies in our approaches. Both India and the EU believe that soft power approach and institution-building based on national and local aspirations would be the key to counter terrorism.
8. At this academic forum, it is pertinent to note that the Indian society never supports expansionist tendencies in the global politics. Historically, Indian people have stood against the interventions of a country in the domestic affairs of others. Although global politics has changed, the guiding principles of India's foreign policy, *Panchsheel*, are still relevant. We are committed to the resolution of all international disputes through peaceful dialogue and negotiations.
9. At this Forum, it may be useful to call for to strengthening the normative basis of India-EU relationship. Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen, has noted India's tradition of argument, public debate and intellectual pluralism. He has contended that the country's rich argumentative traditions are critically important for the success of India's democracy, the defense of its secular politics, removal of inequalities related to class, caste, gender and community, and the pursuit of sub-continental peace. Nowadays India has been witnessing wider public debate on global issues and foreign policy. Proliferation of electronic media and social networking platform has

further enhanced the argumentative virtues of Indian society and generated much needed informed discussion on the subject of foreign policy. In the case of India-EU relations, there is apparently a need for widening scope for greater civil society engagement and deeper people-to-people dialogue. A limited or narrow intellectual discourse on our relationship may not contribute to economic and commercial or political interactions. Scientific inquiry is essential for policy course correction and setting future directions.

10. Finally, I would like to wish Sixth India-EU Forum a great success. We hope the ICWA-EUISS conversations would continue to be sustained and productive in the future as well.

11. In the end, let me just refer to a long list of issues on which we need to exchange views in order to do full justice to the four pillared agenda that has been agreed in advance.

Thank you.
