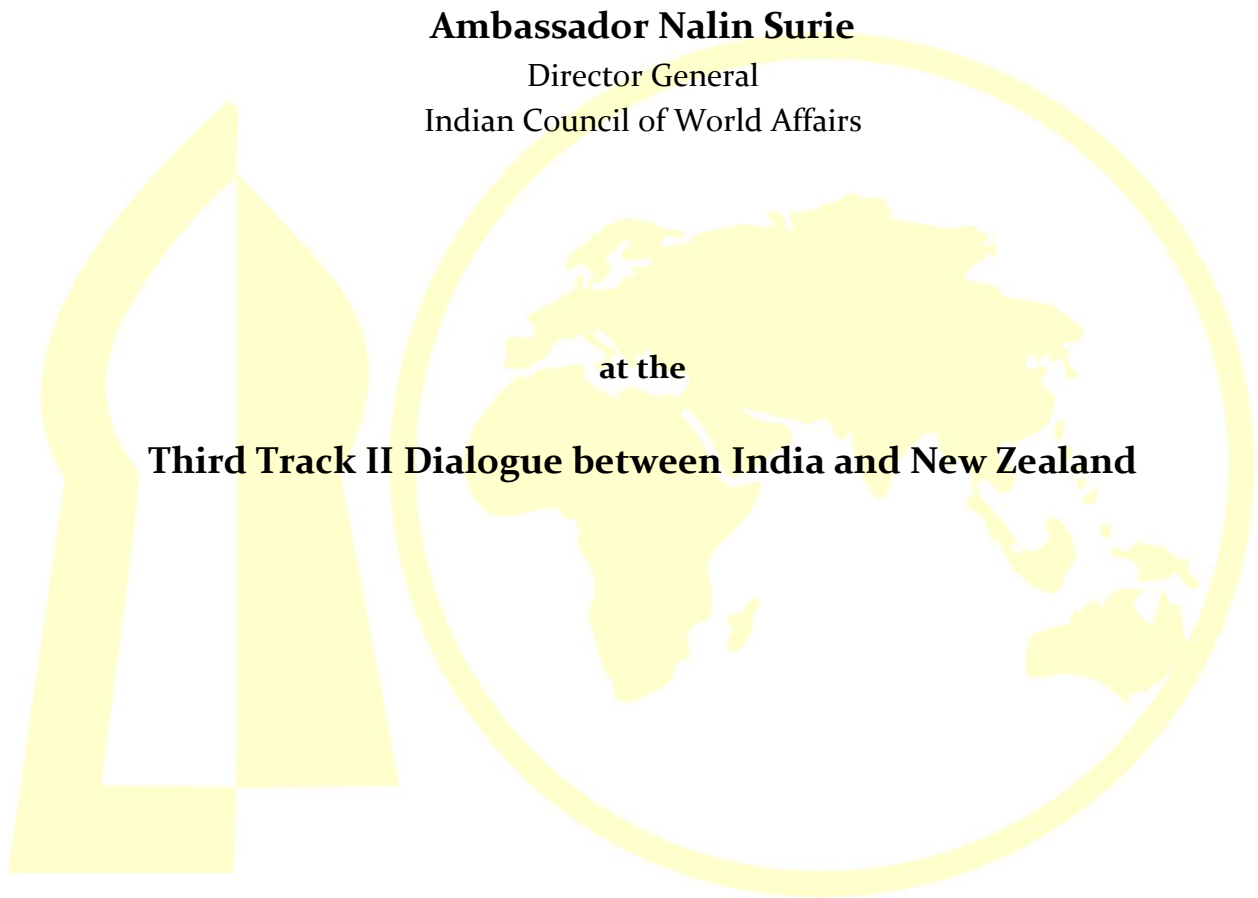


Opening Remarks

by

Ambassador Nalin Surie
Director General
Indian Council of World Affairs



at the

Third Track II Dialogue between India and New Zealand

at

Sapru House
23 April 2018

A very warm welcome to all of you. I missed visiting your beautiful country last year but have the benefit of a very comprehensive briefing on the outcome of the useful discussions that were held between our two delegations. The timeliness of your return visit is also heartening.

Our two countries have a very large number of commonalities but to me three stand out in particular. The first, of course is cricket and the presence of nine New Zealand players in the ongoing IPL is no accident. Kane Williamson, Brendon McCullum, Colin de Grandhomme, Colin Munro, Corey Anderson, Trent Boult, Tim Southee, Michael Santner and Mitchell McClenaghan are all very popular cricketers in India.

The second is the Commonwealth which has just concluded a successful summit. There are numerous opportunities for our two countries to cooperate within the commonwealth framework, particularly vis-à-vis the island developing country members of the Commonwealth.

The third, and in today's context even more important is the issue of connectivity. To a growing extent, the maritime dimension of connectivity is gaining prominence between India and New Zealand. This is particularly relevant in the context of the developing salience of the Indo-Pacific, the security of island states, counter terrorism issues, climate change and the expected changed orientation by the world towards greater exploitation of the ocean economy.

The Indian Diaspora is another important cog in the India-New Zealand story. Education facilities in New Zealand have been a source of considerable attraction for Indian youth. We understand that after completing their education, they are now contributing wholesomely to New Zealand society and its economy.

The agenda before us is largely bilateral and my colleagues will speak at length on the issues concerned. Our effort will be to make concrete suggestions including on trade matters.

In so far as the Indo-Pacific is concerned, we are particularly interested in hearing from you, from your geographical perspective, on how you visualize the growing salience and development of practical cooperation in that region. From my personal perspective, the Indo-Pacific is India's Natural Extended Hinterland. Definitionally, this extends from the east coast of Africa all the way across to the western shores of North and South America. The Pacific islands represent, for the moment, a midway transition point. From India's longer term economic and strategic perspective though, the western sea board of the Americas is equally critical.

Issues pertaining to the Antarctica are an area of bilateral interest and I understand that we have some dialogue on this already. Prof. Chaturvedi will speak on this at greater length. Are there experiences there that are of relevance to what is happening in the Arctic? Your views on this too would be of considerable interest to us.

In so far as the economic dimension is concerned, while a possible FTA between our two countries has its own intrinsic importance, to my mind even without an FTA, we can progress our trade and investment relationship very substantially by focusing on areas where not only each of us has comparative advantage but also where there are technological advancements available especially in New Zealand. Your strengths and advances for instance in dairy technology are well known and admired. Can we look at ways and means of transferring these technologies to India through joint ventures? Can educational cooperation between our two countries become an even more dominant part of our relationship? In this latter context, reports regarding possible changes in New Zealand's immigration policy are a trifle worrying.

In the context of our economic partnership, the recent visit of Prime Minister Modi to Stockholm for the first India-Nordic Summit is particularly relevant. You would have noted that the areas of collaboration identified during that Summit include India benefitting from Nordic advancements in clean technologies, maritime solutions, port modernization, food processing, health, life sciences and agriculture.

I also believe that the Joint Declaration on the India- Sweden Innovation Partnership issued on 17 April 2018 during Prime Minister Modi's recent visit could serve as an example of what India and New Zealand can do together. Permit me to hand over to you a copy of that document.

Indians are travelling abroad in growing numbers in search of new destinations and there are indications that New Zealand can become a preferred destination including for film making. Indian tourists part with their money quite easily and this could be yet another area we could progress to mutual benefit.

I have read reports regarding an affordable housing program in New Zealand that I believe is known as Kiwi Build. As you are, undoubtedly aware, affordable housing and Smart Cities are very much on our agenda and this is yet another sector where we can seek to develop a mutually beneficial partnership.

We have a useful defense partnership between our two countries. As issues of maritime connectivity and security and the Indo-Pacific loom larger, it may be helpful to look at ways and means of further developing this. India's Navy is expanding at a reasonably rapid pace and acquiring greater blue water capabilities. Issues of maritime security, including counter terrorism, security of small island states and territories, protection of EEZs, open SLOCs etc. cannot be ignored much longer.

You are aware of India's interest in APEC membership. Given the present developments in East and Southeast Asia and in the Indian Ocean, it would be useful for us to understand how you

in New Zealand visualize the future of APEC. Our interest in membership of that grouping remains undiminished.

New Zealand is a member of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for TransPacific Partnership (CPATPP). This revised version of the TPP was necessitated by President Trump's abrupt withdrawal of the United States from the TPP. However, his recent suggestion that the United States could join a revised TPP raises interesting economic and political issues. We would be interested in hearing how New Zealand views the latest US position and whether, indeed the TPP in its original form, with some modifications, can become a reality in the near future.

There is no escape from the impact of climate change irrespective of whether or not one believes it is a scientific reality. India has committed itself to a very ambitious program for both mitigation and adaptation including in nuclear power, solar energy, hydro-electricity, wind power and geothermal energy. Does New Zealand have competencies it can share with us in these renewable energy areas?

Along with France we have also established the International Solar Alliance. Is there any New Zealand interest in working with the ISA and its member states?

I have spoken at greater length than I had intended to. Let me, therefore, conclude now with once again extending a warm welcome to all of you. We are looking forward to a meaningful dialogue between us and are hopeful that we can come up with concrete recommendations to further develop and diversify our bilateral relations.
