

**Statement**

**by**

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Director General, ICWA

**at**

**'IV India-EU Forum on Effective Multilateralism – Book Launch event'**

**at**

**Brussels**

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H.E. Pierre Vimont, Secretary General, European External Action Service; H. E. Mr. Dinkar Khullar, our Ambassador to EU, Belgium and Luxembourg; Dr. Antonio Missiroli, Director, EU Institute for Security Studies; Mr. Christian Wagner, Head of Research Division (Asia), German Institute for International and Security Affairs; distinguished members of EU and Indian delegations to the IV India-EU Forum on Effective Multilateralism; Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by conveying our warmest congratulations to the European Community for having won the Nobel Peace Prize for 2012. This is a singular and well-deserved honour. Those of us with a sense of history appreciate fully what the European project of regional integration has done not only for peace and development in your region but in much of the world as well. We in South Asia rejoice in your joyous moment and believe that we have much to learn about utilizing integration as a tool for positive causes.

2. It is my privilege to address you as leader of the Indian delegation at this pre-Forum launch of an important publication *The EU-India partnership: time to go strategic?* It represents a valuable outcome of extended deliberations and dialogue, held among Indian and EU experts at their two sessions in New Delhi and one in Brussels during the period 2009-11. Co-editors of this publication, Dr. Luis Peral and Dr. Vijay Sakhuja, have done a tremendous service to us through their sustained work; they deserve our appreciation and a warm applause.

3. We are delighted with our continuing interaction with EUISS. We wish to deepen and expand it further. This stems from our awareness not only of the vital importance of India-EU relations, but also of the outstanding contribution EUISS has been making over the years as a leading think tank and Track-II institution in Europe. On the other hand, as you know, the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) too has been on an upward trajectory of purposeful pro-activism, focused on promoting India's external relations through academic and other non-official channels. This is central to our mandate and is in keeping with the special status the Parliament of India has bestowed on ICWA as 'an institution of national importance.' Let me state categorically: among 33 MOUs of cooperation we have today with external partner institutions, we consider our relationship with EUISS to be one of the most significant and rewarding collaborations.

4. We come from a region of the world which is a major recipient of ‘power’ now. As President of the International Crisis Group, Dr. Louise Arbour, observed succinctly: ‘The past decade has seen power shift dramatically east and south.’ We also hail from a country that is traversing ‘an exciting transition.’ Experiencing change at multiple levels and at an unprecedented pace, India is witnessing simultaneously ‘an urban revolution, industrial revolution, social revolution and democratic revolution’, according to External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna. Democratic aspirations and pressure of public opinion have been sharp and overwhelming in the age of Internet and 24X7 television, especially now as we prepare for elections in a few states in coming months and elections for the Parliament in 2014.

5. What is even more important is the unfolding economic transformation of India and the sustained energy being put into it. The past decade has confirmed India’s status as one of the fastest growing economies of the world, next only to China. India’s GDP grew roughly 8% over the past decade, thus more than doubling; it is posted to touch \$2 trillion this year, which should translate to \$5 trillion in PPP terms. Projected average GDP growth rate is 8.2% during the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan period of 2012-2017. Half of India’s GDP today is linked to foreign trade, an increase from its level of 20% in the 1990s. The ambitious range of economic liberalization measures, announced recently by the Government, which cover diverse areas such as multi-brand retail, insurance, civil aviation, pension and financial sector, and a credible fiscal consolidation roadmap are expected to add a new momentum to our economy. Dubbed as ‘Reform 2.0’, they are receiving a heightened degree of attention from entrepreneurs and investors around the world, including the European Community.

6. We are, of course, aware of the economic and financial challenges faced by EU today. We watch your brave endeavours to address them with keen interest, concern and empathy. We believe that this is the time to do more rather than less for deepening the Strategic Partnership that links India and EU. We have a rich history together to back it.

7. Our partnership is comprehensive, multi-faceted and inherently strong. It is anchored in shared values such as democracy, respect for pluralism, diversity and rule of law as well as in a

strong commonality of interests. Our considered perception is that while India-EU partnership has developed well since its launch in 2004, it still has considerable potential for further expansion and diversification. For this to be achieved, those of us working at Track II level may need to be more ambitious, candid and constructive. We must - as we shall tomorrow - discuss political and geo-strategic issues of international nature, particularly those affecting the region lying between Europe and India - West Asia and North Africa, Indian Ocean, Afghanistan and Iran - as well as the region east of Asia. Political cooperation, security, terrorism and piracy, trade and economic cooperation, energy, environment, science and technology as well as cooperation in tourism, culture, education and P-to-P links too should figure in our dialogue. We are particularly keen to encourage further broadening of contacts among our strategic communities. This could perhaps be launched under the joint auspices of EUISS and ICWA in future in various EU capitals through mutual consultations.

8. In conclusion, may I make my final point: while our strategic partnership is marked by unfulfilled potential, governments appear to need our help because scholars are capable of looking at short-to-medium term constraints, while spelling out their long-term vision and the way to secure it. India clearly wants EU to be a substantive partner in our growth and development. We are also ready and willing to be helpful to EU in securing its legitimate interests as an important global player. Let us move forward to deepen our mutual understanding and fulfill the expectations that have been placed on our shoulders by our shared destiny.

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