Welcome Remarks

by

Dr. T C A Raghavan

Director General
Indian Council of World Affairs

on the occasion of

The First IBSA Gandhi-Mandela Memorial Freedom Lecture

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New Delhi

Your Excellency Mr. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa President of the Republic of South Africa,

Your Excellency the First Lady, Dr. Tshepo Motsepe

Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

Ministers of the Government of South Africa,

Members of the delegation from South Africa,

Your Excellency, Mr. Andre Aranha Correa do Lago, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Ladies and Gentlemen and colleagues,

Good Afternoon and Happy Republic Day in advance.

It is a privilege for the Indian Council of World Affairs to host the First IBSA Gandhi-Mandela Memorial Freedom Lecture.

That the lecture is being delivered by His Excellency the President of South Africa in the presence of our respected Prime Minister enhances the quality of this occasion.

On the eve of our 70th Republic Day, Mr. President your presence also coincides with the 150th birth anniversary of the father of our nation Mahatma Gandhi.

In September last year fell the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela and which was commemorated by the United Nations, in South Africa, in India and indeed all over the world.

There is a special significance to the legacy of these two great thought and action leaders being observed as an event to commemorate another important anniversary.

This is the 15th year since the founding of the grouping comprising India, Brazil and South Africa – IBSA in short. IBSA countries decided to celebrate the occasion with fifteen events held in all three countries over 2018-19. This Freedom Lecture is a flagship event of that series. The idea of a commemorative lecture series – the Gandhi-Mandela Freedom Lecture, was enthusiastically endorsed by the IBSA foreign ministers during their meeting in New York in September 2018.

IBSA is a grouping spanning three continents, three countries with similar histories of colonization, three developing countries and, most significantly of all, three democracies. IBSA's success demonstrates, most vividly, the desirability and feasibility of South-South cooperation beyond the conventional areas of exchange of experts and training. For instance the IBSA Fund for Alleviation of Poverty and Hunger, established in 2003, is a unique initiative through which development projects are executed with IBSA funding in fellow developing countries.

Our aspirations are common – a better quality of material and spiritual life for our peoples and to build societies that are pluralistic and inclusive. These were the very aspirations that had guided the thoughts and actions of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela.

All three partner countries are multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious nations and democracies.

In brief, IBSA brings together three democracies and economies from three continents to one platform.

Respected Prime Minister, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen we are most fortunate to have the President of South Africa to deliver this First Gandhi-Mandela Freedom Lecture. His own career in public life is a story of the struggle to attain the very goals and ideals of Gandhiji and Nelson Mandela. Legal studies, political struggle, imprisonment and being part of the leadership of the African National Congress that negotiated South Africa's transition to democracy, chairperson of the Constitutional Assembly that wrote a new constitution for South Africa– all these are elements which have much in common with the two leaders we commemorate today. H.E. Mr. Ramaphosa also has an investment and business background which makes his presence in an IBSA commemorative event all the more relevant.

Mr. President, on behalf of the Indian Council of World Affairs, I have the honour to request you to deliver the First IBSA Gandhi-Mandela Freedom Lecture.

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