INDIAN COUNCIL
OF WORLD AFFAIRS

IBSA

The First IBSA Gandhi-Mandela Memorial Freedom Lecture

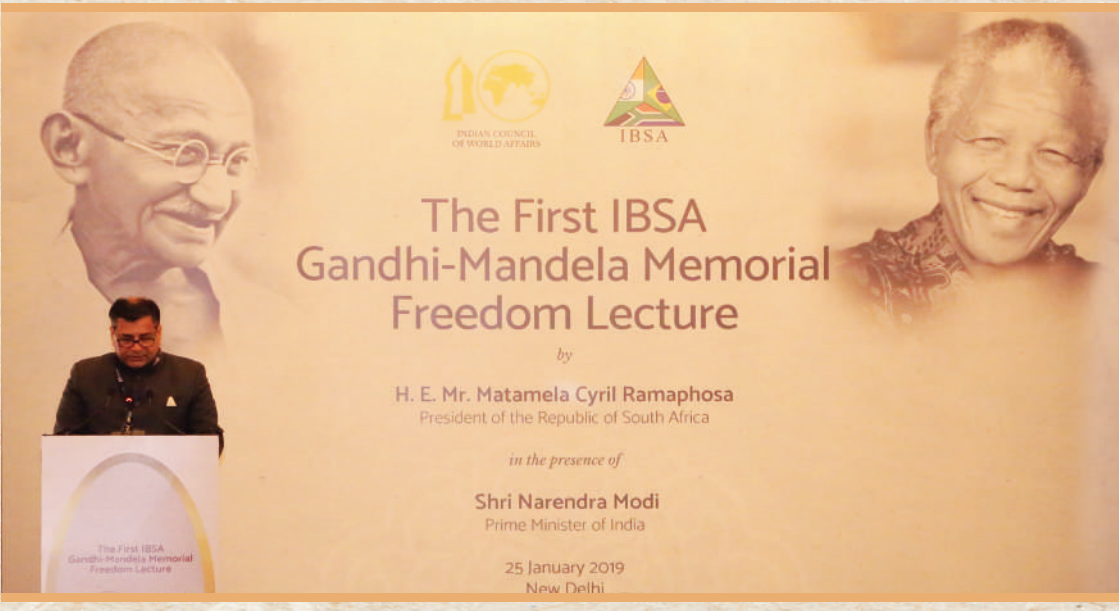
by

H. E. Mr. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa
President of the Republic of South Africa

in the presence of

Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

25 January 2019
New Delhi



Welcome Remarks by
Dr. T.C.A. Raghavan

Director General, Indian Council of World Affairs

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 of India
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 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 to be 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.

[As delivered]

First IBSA Gandhi-Mandela Memorial Freedom Lecture by H.E. Mr. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa

President of the Republic of South Africa

Your Excellency Prime Minister Modi,
Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers from both South African and India,
President of the Indian Council of World Affairs, Dr. TCA Raghavan,
Ambassador of Brazil in the Republic of India,
High Commissioner Kamboj, High Commissioner of the Republic of India to the Republic of South Africa,
The Charge d'Affaires of the Republic of South Africa to the Republic of India,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this, my first official visit to India as President of the Republic of South Africa, it is a great honour to have been called upon to deliver the very first India-Brazil-South Africa Gandhi-Mandela Freedom Lecture.

Since the end of apartheid in 1994, India and South Africa have had close political, cultural, trade and strategic ties in a number of other areas.

This cooperation has been further deepened since South Africa joined the BRICS group in 2010.

India was one of the first countries in the whole world to recognise democratic South Africa after the attainment of our freedom.

The Red Fort Declaration, signed by first President of democratic South Africa, President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela during a state visit in 1997, is rooted in Afro-Asian solidarity and has given rise to a successful and enduring strategic partnership between the two countries.

Our partnership is based on shared values and common interests that are underpinned by a common vision of freedom, development, peace and prosperity – not just for our respective countries but for all the peoples of the world.

I want to acknowledge and thank the people of India for the encouragement, the inspiration, as well as the practical support that they extended to us during our struggle for liberation. This extension of great generosity was also eloquently expressed by Nelson Mandela in one of his letters from prison in 1980. We know that this support that India gave unreservedly in aid of our struggle is due to our deep friendship and progressive internationalism of the successive Governments of the people of India.

India's leaders have been consistent in their solidarity with the liberation struggles not just of South Africa, but of other countries as well, particularly on the African continent.

In addressing the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955, it was one of your most outstanding leaders, Jawaharlal Nehru, who told delegates:

"Everything else pales into insignificance when I think of the infinite tragedy of Africa ever since the days when millions of Africans were carried away as galley slaves to America and elsewhere, half of them dying in the galleys…even now the tragedy of Africa is greater than that of any other continent, whether it is racial or political. It is up to Asia to help Africa to the best of her ability…because we are sister continents."

We are indeed sister continents, and we are bound by the umbilical link of history.

Indian people were first brought to South Africa as indentured labourers, and you can read as 'slaves' because being an indentured labourer those days essentially meant that you were a slave. They were brought in that form in 1860 to the shores of South Africa. They have retained their vibrant culture, their languages, their traditions and values. This has, in many ways, added to the rich tapestry that is our country's multicultural society today.

Many of these men, women and children who came in search of a better life to South Africa were subjected to some of the most inhumane conditions in the history of humankind on the sugar plantations of South Africa.

After serving their indenture, slavery in parenthesis, a large percentage of them returned to India.

But many others stayed, and made South Africa their new home.

It is testimony to the patriotism and love for South Africa in this community that so many of the luminaries of the anti-apartheid struggle were of Indian origin.

The South African Indian community did play a formative role in the freedom struggle in South Africa, and after apartheid ended as well, particularly in the reconstruction of a new South Africa.

We remember those great leaders: Yusuf Dadoo, Monty Naicker, Fatima and Ismail Meer, Laloo Chiba, Barney Desai, Ahmed Timol, Ismail Mohamed, Amina Desai, Billy Nair, Yusuf Cachalia, Ahmed Kathrada, and many others who will be forever remembered for their contribution to the liberation struggle.

Many of them rose to become gigantic figures also in our democracy. People like Ahmed Kathrada served many years in prison alongside Nelson Mandela. Ismail Mohamed rose to become Chief Justice of South Africa. Ahmed Timol, who was recently recognized by the African National Congress and was given the highest honour that the ANC ever gives to people who have contributed to the struggle, was killed brutally by the apartheid police during apartheid. The South African Indian community also produced outstanding activists and cadres who today serve with distinction not only in our government but in a number of other areas in the professions: legal profession, medical profession, business, engineering profession and many others. This is a rich bequest that we as South Africans have earned from a tragedy that occurred in 1860 when people of Indian origin were brought to our shores in South Africa as 'slaves' or indentured labour.

Mahatma Gandhi's granddaughter, Ela Gandhi, played a leading role in the women's movement in South Africa and was among the first group of MPs of the democratic South Africa.

These were all leaders of conviction and of principle and many of them continued to be high-placed people of conviction and principle in the service of the people of South Africa.

Those who have departed were unwavering in their belief in the unity of all the oppressed, and stood firmly against any attempt by the racist apartheid State to divide our people along ethnic and tribal lines. This resolve still remains in the hearts and minds of many people of Indian origin in our country.

They believed, and still believe, as has been the founding principle of the African National Congress, that South Africa belongs to all who live in it.

Today we pay tribute to the life and times of two of the greatest leaders and Statesmen of their generations, and perhaps of all time.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, fondly known as Gandhiji, and Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, known to all of us as Madiba, are those two great Statesmen and leaders.

Their legacies go far beyond their stature as the founding fathers of our two great independent nations, India and South Africa.

What they lived for, what they stood for, and indeed what they fought for, continues to resonate with people across the world decades since their departure from this earth.

They have influenced generations of leaders not just in South Africa and India, but worldwide.

Their thoughts – on justice and liberty, on human dignity and human rights, and on non-violent resistance – continues to influence social and political movements in all four corners of the globe.

They shared a common passion for, and understanding of, the principle of sustainable development decades before the term was even coined.

They understood the importance of environmental conservation, of the development of rural communities, of agricultural self-sufficiency being critical to a nation's success.

Gandhiji and Madiba were products of their times. They were also products of the social, political, cultural and other influences that made and shaped them and moulded them into what they became.

Yet, in many ways, they were men who were far ahead of their time.

It is indisputable that they were great visionaries. It is also indisputable that they were great thinkers as well.

We often take for granted the sheer force of will, the courage, the conviction and the strength of character that would have been required to be a leader at such times.

These were times when the clamour of the oppressed for justice and freedom was growing apace, matched only by the brutality of those who sought to crush them.

When liberation came, instead of retribution and vengeance, they extended an olive branch to the former oppressor.

They espoused ideals that weren't necessarily popular at the time – and never populist – but they were grounded in the strong belief that resistance against an unjust system could never succeed if the oppressed sank to the level of the oppressor.

Their techniques of civil resistance, coupled with the moral force of their ideas, have endured through the passage of time.

They serve as beacons of hope for many who continue to suffer race, gender, class, ethnic, religious and other forms of oppression as well as exclusion.

This year, India marks 150 years since the birth of Mahatma Gandhiji, which coincides with South Africa's celebration of the centenary of Nelson Mandela's birth.

We are privileged to claim these two icons as our own and to know, as we do, the deep impact and influence that Gandhi had on Mandela.

As President of South Africa, I am particularly proud that the seeds of Gandhiji's political awareness were sown and given birth and rise in my country.

Barely days after arriving in the country as a newly qualified barrister, he experienced the brutal treatment of apartheid, racial oppression, when he was forcibly removed from a train carriage that was supposedly reserved only for white people.

This humiliating treatment of harsh racism spurred him to enter a life of political activism. Thus, the seed had been born in him to resist and to seek justice.

This and a series of other forms of degradations at the hands of the colonial authorities in South Arfica awakened in Gandhiji a keen passion for justice and equality among people.

He would later write that this forced him to reflect on the nature of oppression, on the law as an instrument of oppression, and on the pervasive belief of racial superiority held by the European colonisers in India, South Africa and elsewhere.

He then began mobilising the local Indian community, and helped found the Natal Indian Congress in 1894 and became its first Secretary.

The organisation was the first in South Africa to bring together Indians of all classes, and during its inception it advocated for the rights of Indian traders who faced discrimination in the then Natal province of South Africa.

This was later broadened to supporting the interests of all the local Indian community in general.

It was at the helm of the Natal Indian Congress that Gandhiji first began to articulate his position on civil disobedience, and the philosophy that he so well espoused: satyagraha.

A defining moment for the Satyagraha movement was in August 1908 when Gandhi encouraged those present to burn their identity documents outside the Hamidia Mosque in Johannesburg.

More than 2,000 of these ID documents were burned that day and mass arrests followed.

The ANC's defiance campaign and anti-pass campaigns that began in the 1950s and were also extended into the 1980s were very much influenced influenced by Gandhi's approach to passive resistance.

Decades after its formation, the Natal Indian Congress, and later the South African Indian Congress, joined hands with the country's other liberation movements including the African National Congress, in organising against the repressive apartheid system.

The South African Indian Congress was one of the organisations that was responsible for organising the Congress of the People in Kliptown on 26 June 1955.

It was here that the Freedom Charter, the precursor to South Africa's democratic Constitution, was adopted.

It was a firm statement of the commitment of the people of South Africa to a path of non-racialism.

For Madiba, Gandhiji was an inspiration and a role model.

In tracing the evolution of his political thought, as laid out in his writings and speeches, we see clearly the confluence of history, experience and pragmatism – as we have seen with those of Gandhiji.

Gandhiji's formative activism focused on the plight of the vulnerable Indian minority in South Africa.

His documented views, especially those around securing the franchise for Indians in South Africa, but also on western civilisation, on racial hierarchies in India, or on secularism, could today be read through a different prism.

But of this we are certain: they believed in the innate dignity of the human being, in the moral authority of a non-violent mass resistance to oppression, and in the enduring strength of people's power.

There are so many aspects to Nelson Mandela's legacy – but he is most revered for his commitment to a peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy, one that brought together the oppressed and the oppressor to finally have a democratic outcome.

He was able to put in process the healing of a deeply divided and broken society by promoting reconciliation between the races.

Nelson Mandela drew inspiration from Gandhiji's words, that 'forgiveness is the attribute of the strong'.

Legacy is a complex phenomenon, as most of us will know, and it is by no means assured, even for the most revered leaders that we uphold.

Both of these great leaders entered the political arena at a time that was vastly different to ours.

The issues that they advocated for and how they articulated them; the political positions they took and the political decisions they made – will always be subject to interpretation and re-interpretation.

Those of us who have chosen a life of politics, like Prime Minister Modi and myself, will know too well that the actions we undertake at a particular time will by necessity be held up to public scrutiny by future generations. There will forever be many people who are researchers, scholars and intellectuals who will put the actions that we have taken under a microscope and try to find out what motivated us, what ideologies we were pursuing and what principles we were adhering to.

They may be praised, but they may also be derided or condemned.

Yet we know that the transience of politics is one thing, and the enduring nature of universal values – of justice, of equality, of self-sacrifice, of solidarity with the underdog – are another.

In paying tribute to Gandhiji in 1997, Madiba said:

> "He showed us that it was necessary to brave imprisonment if truth and justice were to triumph over evil. The values of tolerance, mutual respect and unity for which he stood and acted had a profound influence on our liberation movement, and on my own thinking. This inspires us today in our efforts of reconciliation and nation building."

Gandhiji, like Nelson Mandela, was an internationalist.

Long before the issue of apartheid was put on the agenda of the United Nations, he travelled to India to publicise the oppression of the colonial regime in South Africa.

It was the Government of India that was the first to request the UN General Assembly to confront racial discrimination in South Africa and which banned trade with apartheid South Africa soon thereafter.

A hundred years since the birth of Nelson Mandela, and 150 years since the birth of Gandhiji, we are proud to follow in their footsteps of progressive internationalism.

We share a commitment to realising a global community of nations at peace with each other, and a world founded on social justice and human rights for all.

In his first address to the UN General Assembly, President Nelson Mandela spoke of the interdependence between nations – saying that ensuring that democracy, peace and prosperity prevail everywhere was "the great challenge of our age".

As we South Africans take up our non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council, South Africa is acutely aware of the responsibility we have been entrusted with.

In Madiba's honour, we have chosen for our term the theme: 'Continuing the Legacy: Working for a Just and Peaceful World,' continuing Nelson Mandela's legacy.

The African Union's Agenda 2063 aspires to an end of conflict and the silencing of the guns on the continent of Africa by 2020.

Serving on the UN Security Council affords us the opportunity to meaningfully contribute towards this goal.

We are determined to ensure that Africa is not relegated to the periphery of world affairs. We want Africa to take its place, and, in fact, we as Africans, with active support of our sister continent, where India resides, are saying, "this century is Africa's century."

We will advance our foreign policy in a manner that champions the interests of Africa and her peoples. But we will do so with full respect and cooperation, as well as collaboration, with other countries around the world. and India is one of those that we count among the first that we seek cooperation and collaboration with.

As a country, South Africa has come a long way since 1994.

But while we look back on the achievements of the past 25 years, we also know much more needs to be done in our country to eradicate poverty, inequality and underdevelopment.

Yet we take to our challenges with vigour, knowing that the South Africa that Nelson Mandela dreamt of, the South Africa that Gandhiji dreamt of – a democratic, non-racist, non-sexist South Africa – is indeed within our reach.

As we build on our achievements, we applaud the Government of India, particularly in relation to its focus on Afro-Indian solidarity.

This solidarity and cooperation has geopolitical, cultural, educational, technical and economic aspects.

Prime Minister Modi, the Ten Guiding Principles announced during your visit to Uganda last year stress the importance of an equal developmental partnership that will be to the benefit of all of our people.

South Africa looks forward to participate in the fourth India-Africa Forum Summit, and to further advance collaboration between India and Africa within the framework of Agenda 2063.

South Africa and India have come a long way in addressing our respective challenges of underdevelopment, economic and political marginalisation.

Both Gandhi and Mandela wanted to see a world free of racial discrimination, but it was the grinding poverty experienced by millions of people in the Global South that pained them the most.

They understood that unless poverty was addressed and eradicated, the highest level of human progress would not be attained.

Through our cooperation on a range of platforms such as being members of BRICS, IBSA, the Indian Ocean Rim Association, the G20, the G77 plus China and the Non-Aligned Movement, we will continue to work together in pursuit of a world that is free of poverty.

The India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum in particular is a practical expression of our shared values of democracy, justice, human rights, and good governance.

It prioritises inclusiveness, human development, peace, transparency, social justice and equity.

As like-minded emerging economies we recognise that we have a collective role to play in addressing, but more importantly in correcting the imbalances of the global economy. The global economy is facing a number of challenges right now. And these are challenges of lackluster growth that will no doubt have an impact on growing or developing economies.

IBSA countries have made substantial contributions in improving the lives of thousands of people through the IBSA Fund.

Many of these activities have taken place quietly in the background without much fanfare, but have provided much-needed relief and hope to the recipient countries.

As South Africa, we look forward to deepening our relations with India through stronger commercial and people-to-people ties.

We need to focus on growing our trade, increasing investments in each-other's countries. The progress that we have achieved thus far is quite impressive and in our meeting earlier this

morning we committed ourselves to increasing the cooperation between our two countries at all levels.

We can be proud of the road our two countries have traversed; two sister countries separated by an ocean, but bound together by history, by the collective energies of our people, and by the deep friendship and respect we hold for each other.

The legacies of Gandhiji and Madiba have never been more important than they are today.

They sacrificed personal advancement, both as lawyers, for the common good. And they used their talent, and their craft as lawyers, to advance the interests of ordinary people.

Theirs was a lifelong pursuit of sathya, dharma, shanti and prema– of truth, righteousness, peace and love –in order to realise a better world.

With so many parts of the world beset by conflict, we have to hold firm to the belief that peace indeed can be attained, that universal peace is possible, and that no person is too small, or sees themselves as too unimportant or insignificant to play their part.

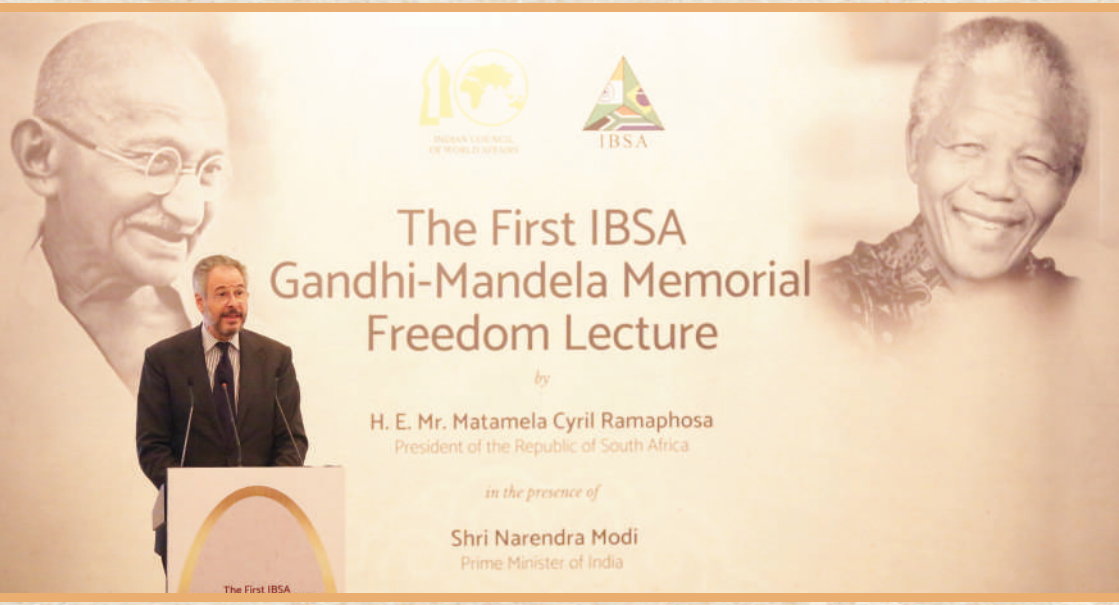
It was Gandhi ji who told us – "be the change you want to see in the world."

One can ask oneself – what change would Gandhiji and Madiba have wanted to see in today's world? And I would like to posit a thought and say these two outstanding leaders of our times would have wanted to see a change in the world driven by increased respect for human rights across the world, harmony and peace in the world, a better life for all the people in the world, eradication of poverty and inequality. They would also have wanted to see a multipolar world where nations of the world respect one another, where cooperation amongst all the countries is the order of the day, where multilateralism is respected and upheld, and where there is tolerance of each-other on a number of fronts: religious, racial, creed, class, regional affiliation and many others.

India and South Africa share a commitment to freedom and democracy, to non-racialism and tolerance, to social equity and the eradication of poverty.

Let us strengthen the bonds that exist between our two countries and our peoples as we look to the future. For as we look to the past, we have great foundations, we have towering pillars that can continue to support our resolve to achieve all these ideas. Those towering figures are Gandhiji and Madiba. Let us look forward to a future of hope and renewal, a future of peace and prosperity, a future that is bright and guided by the light of these two great men whose memory we are celebrating today.

I thank you.



Vote of Thanks
by H.E. Mr. Andre A. Correa do Lago
Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil to India

Mr. President and Madame Ramaphosa,
Prime Minister Narendra Modi,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Mr Raghavan,

Thank you for including me in this extraordinary event. I have to commend President Ramaphosa for this wonderful lecture that we were honoured to hear.

As we honor Gandhi and Mandela, my mind is inevitably drawn to how India, Brazil and South Africa, three dazzlingly singular countries, have come to share so much in our values and in the plights of our history, and how natural it is for us to work together on the international stage united by IBSA.

Gandhi and Mandela are revered as champions in the struggle for freedom. They stood out for their courage and originality in facing the evils of colonialism and racism with a message of conciliation, non-violence, acceptance of differences and peace.

In Brazil, Gandhi and Mandela inspire the admiration of people of all backgrounds. And this is so, I believe, because we find that so much of our own ideals resonate with their messages. They are inspiration to us.

Like India and South Africa, Brazil had to rise from colonial rule, and had to face the legacy of poverty, slavery, exploitation of native populations and many other forms of injustice colonialism left behind. And like India and South Africa, we chose to tread the path of peace. Brazil, it is said, is a child of diplomacy. In spite of its size and of sharing borders with ten other countries, we succeeded in negotiating the contours of our map without aggression and war. This has shaped our culture throughout history and established the confidence of the Brazilian people in diplomacy.

Our nations find common ground, furthermore, in the vibrancy of our democracies. The strength of our institutions has allowed us to find novel, objective and national solutions to our challenges. Brazil, after difficult years of political, economic and moral crisis, has given President Bolsonaro a clear mandate to bring about a new moment for our country. President Ramaphosa, you have met with him yesterday in Davos. In this year that India chairs IBSA and Brazil chairs BRICS, President Ramaphosa and Prime Minister Modi, President Bolsonaro looks forward to host you in Brazil.

15 years ago, the creation of IBSA provided a platform for our countries to find a common voice. IBSA brought together three dynamic, multiethnic and multicultural democracies; three emerging economies seeking to play a larger active role in world affairs; one from each of the three continents that were, almost completely, under colonial rule.

But now, in the 21st Century, many of the best solutions for the problems the world faces are developed in our countries. Our nations embrace our cultural diversity, and know that our complexities and contradictions can be and become our greatest strengths. We have, in fact, anticipated, in our own countries, many of the central debates of the contemporary world.

When we picture Gandhi and Mandela in our minds, we always remember them with a smile on their faces. Here we find another deep bond uniting us: the optimism that chooses life in the face of adversity and challenges sorrow with joy. I'll now mention something that may be curious, but which is certainly symbolic. When Gandhi died, a community of labourers in the city of Salvador, descendants of African slaves, christened themselves the "Sons of Gandhi" [Filhos de Gandhy]. They mourned the Mahatma; but they, too, knew how to disarm their sorrows with a smile. Every year since, the Sons of Gandhi have paraded on the streets, dressed in the likeliness of the Mahatma, performing music and dances originated in Africa, uniting people of all races to bring a message of peace during Carnaval. They are Brazilians proud of our country's African roots and inspired by the Mahatma's example.

Our natural confluence in multilateral forums, about many of the most pressing international issues today, pays testimony to the strength of IBSA, and how much we are yet to achieve working together. Because, to this day, indignation at the unjust and the unjustifiable, which is the greatest force of historical progress, has in democracy the best vehicle to influence reality. The leadership and coordination of our three countries towards sustainable development, be it in the Conferences of Johannesburg, Rio or Hyderabad, would certainly please both Gandhi and Mandela.

I must here express my gratitude to the Indian chairship of IBSA and its ongoing efforts to raise the forum to its full potential.