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Indian Council of World Affairs

Sapru House, New Delhi

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/ [In Focus \(show_content.php?lang=1&level=1&ls_id=3689&lid=2264\)](#)

Address by Hon'ble Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister, Government of India at the Book Launch of 'India-Africa Relations: Changing Horizons', 17 May 2022.

Director General Vijay Thakur Singh,

Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia,

Excellencies, My three distinguished former bosses in the front row,

Colleagues of the MEA, past and present,

Colleagues of the ICWA,

Dear friends,

It is a great pleasure to join you all today at the launch of Amb Rajiv Bhatia's book "India-Africa Relations: Changing Horizons". I commend the author for bringing his great scholarship and considerable diplomatic expertise to bear on this important subject. I also thank the Indian Council for World Affairs for organizing this event and help spotlight India-Africa ties. Allow me to share some views today on this crucial partnership.

2. India-Africa relations are truly deep rooted and go back into the recesses of history. Our connections are particularly strong with the societies on its eastern coast and were nurtured by the monsoon-driven eco-system of the Indian Ocean. Those with greater land contiguity saw the human contacts that accompanied trade and commerce. So whether it is the dhow or the caravan, a deep connect was developed over many centuries whose reflections can be found in habits, in communities and in experiences.

3. The era of Western imperialism strengthened the contacts, sometimes in a paradoxical fashion. Indian labour was brought to Africa to work in colonial infrastructure projects and commercial ventures. It certainly led to greater cultural inter-penetration; but it also eventually created a modern Indian Diaspora in Africa. At the same time, shared experiences of oppression generated a common desire for freedom and independence. We in India can never forget that our freedom struggle owes so much to the campaigns that Mahatma Gandhi first practiced in Africa and then brought back to his own country.

4. This shared bonding of fighting against colonialism is a deeply emotional one, very difficult to explain to those who have not gone through it. It explains the solidarity that we intuitively express at global platforms, whether it was the issue of African independence itself, the battle against apartheid, the continuing debate on fair and just development, or more recently, the inequities of the pandemic response. It is also a reason why, even when our own resources and capabilities were much more meagre, we embarked on a development partnership with Africa.

5. History, also bequeathed us, even though it was unintended, the commonality of many institutions and practices. In the last many decades, the very mechanisms that were designed for control have become tools of development and governance. As we progress in the world together, similar platforms and work cultures facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices. We, in India would like to make this a greater focus of cooperation.

6. Now, what was a steadily developing relationship between India and Africa and Ambassador Bhatia has brought that out in some detail, was rapidly taken to a much higher level once Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to the helm of affairs in India in 2014. His interest in Africa reflects the extensive contacts that Gujarat, his home state, which I also represent in the Parliament, has had with the continent. But it also speaks for his perspectives on greater equity and sustainable development in the world, mirroring his domestic commitment to a just, fair and inclusive society. The contemporary Indian thinking on our ties were spelt out by his address to the Ugandan Parliament in July 2018. And both DG and Ambassador have made a reference to it. The guiding principles that he articulated addressed issues that confront all African countries and define India's approach to partnering with them. In essence, he emphasised that India would respond to Africa's priorities, to Africa's demands and needs, rather than bring a unilateral agenda. We understand that Africa wants multiple options to get the best out of the international order and will endeavour to provide that credibly. To that end, we are also open to working with third countries.

7. But it was not just new thinking and energy that Prime Minister Modi brought to our ties. He has also devoted a much higher degree of attention, resources and capabilities to this

account. High-level visits are one example of this new prioritization. Since 2014, there have been 34 outgoing visits by our President, Vice-President and Prime Minister to Africa. At the same time, there have been more than 100 incoming visits from Africa. In many cases, such high-level interactions are taking place after multiple decades. Similarly, as India expanded its diplomatic footprint globally, Africa was given pride of place. 18 new Embassies have opened since 2018, taking our total Missions and Posts in the continent to 49. The India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) was elevated through an expanded format in 2015 that saw the presence of all African states, 41 of them at the level of Heads of State or Heads of Government. The Covid pandemic interrupted the natural progression of this momentum of cooperation and it is today our shared challenge to pick up the threads.

8. Now, Development partnership and capacity building is at the core of our relationship. And it speaks for our shared desire of developing together as equals. The difference that we have made to the hard and soft infrastructure is something of which we can be justifiably proud. To date, India has completed 189 projects in Africa, with 76 at the execution stage and 68 today at the pre-execution stage. Financed by lines of credit with an outlay of over USD 12 billion, they extend to over 41 countries. Many of these projects were the first of their kind in Africa. Some of them are truly iconic in nature. And Notable examples include the Railway line and Presidential Palace in Ghana, National Assembly Building in Gambia, the Rivatex textile Factory in Kenya, the Metro Express project in Mauritius and the Mahatma Gandhi Convention Centre in Niger. Expectedly, Africa has been a major beneficiary of India's improved project delivery as a result of the Pragati evaluation process.

9. Capacity building and skill development have accompanied the creation of assets. The Government of India had announced 50,000 scholarships for African youth during IAFS-III, out of which more than 32,000 slots have been utilized. India is also helping countries to bridge the digital divide. The Pan Africa e-Network, launched in 2009, was purposefully taken forward with the first phase completed in 2017. We have now entered a new era with the introduction of e-VidyaBharati for tele-education and e-Arogya Bharati Project for telemedicine (E-VBAB). So far, 19 countries have signed the MOUs to become partners. During the last five years, 6 IT Centres in South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Lesotho, Ghana, Namibia and Tanzania, a Centre for Geo-informatics Applications in Rural Development-Technology Centre in Madagascar and Niger were established to promote digital transformation in Africa. A Technology Centre in Zimbabwe was also upgraded.

10. The story on the trade front is also an encouraging one. India is today, fourth largest partner for Africa registering trade of USD 69.7 billion during 2018-19. This has obviously been impacted during the Covid years but we are expecting a strong recovery. The Duty Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme announced by India has benefited African nations by

extending duty free access to 98.2% of India's total tariff lines. African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which came into force in January 2021 is expected to enhance our trade volumes. African producers have the potential of taking full advantage of India's growing energy and food demands. Indeed, we already have a tradition of sourcing lentils from eastern and southern Africa that we expect to expand.

11. Where investment is concerned, India ranks fifth with a cumulative commitment of USD 70.7 billion. Indian industry has made sizeable commitments in oil and gas, mining, banking, textiles, automotive and agriculture, etc. Several Indian companies and brands have made Africa their second home and are offering their products and services all across the continent.

12. Particularly when it comes to economic engagement, the Indian diaspora can play a crucial bridging role. They have an understanding of both societies and a creditable record of navigating challenges. This link has been referred to by Amb Bhatia as a 'Third Space', and even as he calls for greater attention to this particular aspect of the relationship. The diaspora is estimated to be 3 million strong today, spread across 46 countries. The largest concentration is at present in South Africa, Mauritius, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique. To boost people-to-people links, India now extends e-Visa facilities to 33 African countries. India has also emerged as an attractive destination for medical tourism.

13. Given our proximity, it is also natural that our cooperation would extend to the domains of defence and maritime security. As in some other areas, past history and early capacity building initiatives have laid the foundation. India was associated with the establishment of defence institutions in Nigeria, Ethiopia and Tanzania. Our military training teams have worked with their counterparts in Botswana, Lesotho, Zambia, Uganda, Namibia, Tanzania, Mauritius and Seychelles. Our growing maritime security cooperation is centred around Mauritius and Seychelles, but now extends to coastal African nations as well. Challenges of anti-piracy, counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism are increasingly visualized as a shared problem. India is guided by the SAGAR doctrine and has often been a first responder in HADR situations. Op Sahayata to assist cyclone-hit Mozambique in 2019 and Op Vanilla to provide relief to flood victims in Madagascar in 2020 are notable recent examples.

14. We are very conscious of the expanding threats posed by radicalism and fundamentalism and terrorism to African societies. These have been the subject of our contemporary agenda of cooperation. The first India-Africa Defence Ministers' Conclave in conjunction with DEFEXPO INDIA in February 2020, institutionalized defence cooperation between us. The 'Lucknow Declaration' was adopted as an outcome document of the Conclave. The second edition of the Defence Dialogue proposed in March 2022 was postponed due to unavoidable circumstances, but we hope that it will take place soon.

15. A long-standing facet of our defence contacts has been through UN peacekeeping operations in Africa. Overall, India has undertaken 12 such missions in the continent. Currently, 4483 Indian personnel serve in five peacekeeping Missions in Democratic Republic of Congo, Morocco, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia.

16. It is evident from the picture of cooperation that I have laid out that our relationship is multi-faceted and deep rooted. Therefore, it was only to be expected that we would close ranks to confront the 'once in a century' pandemic that engulfed the world. India provided 150 tonnes of medical assistance to 32 African countries during this period. Many of them utilized 'Made in India' vaccines. Independent of that, we are still providing medicines, medical equipment, ambulances and cancer treatment machines to African hospitals. At international forums, we have joined forces to urge equitable and affordable access to vaccines, including through a TRIPS Waiver. Travel related discrimination has also been a subject of shared concern.

17. Today, our ties too must respond to the volatile and uncertain world that we confront. There are important lessons to be learnt from the pandemic disruption. The stresses from the knock-on effects of the Ukraine conflict are also relevant. India and Africa can come together in the building of reliable and resilient supply chains. They are important hubs in the decentralized globalization that is so needed by the international community. When it comes to technology, an emphasis on trust and transparency makes us natural partners. India's own vision of cooperation with Africa will increasingly centre around health, digital and green growth. And this is so because we believe that these are Africa's priorities as well. We envisage our African partners as critical to two important international initiatives spearheaded by India: the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.

18. When it comes to political issues, we share the frustration of international organizations being unrepresentative of contemporary reality. That this has made them increasingly ineffective is of little consolation. India believes that Africa must have an adequate presence and voice in global decision-making, including in the reformed UN Security Council. And in turn, we count on Africa to stand up for a partner with whom it has a past, a present and a future. When it comes to the critical issues of our times – climate justice, SDGs achievement or combating terrorism– our multilateral partnership will continue unabated. India believes that Africa's growth and progress is intrinsic to global rebalancing. Its enormous demographic dividend must be realized. Indeed, it is only when this continent attains its true potential that the world will really become multipolar.

19. We all owe Ambassador Bhatia a collective debt for highlighting the significance of our ties

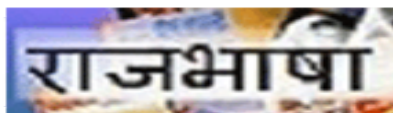
through his book. I am confident that his book would help enhance interest in and support for this key partnership. I thank him and ICWA for the programme today and all of you for your presence.

Thank You.



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