

STATEMENT BY MRS. PRENEET KAUR, MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS AND HEAD OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION TO THE HIGH LEVEL UNITED
NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AT NAIROBI, KENYA
ON DECEMBER 2, 2009

Mr. President, Excellencies, and Distinguished Delegates

I am honoured and privileged to participate in the High Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.

At the outset, please allow me to express our deepest gratitude to our host, His Excellency President Mwai Kibaki and the Government and people of Kenya, for the warm hospitality and for the excellent arrangements made in Nairobi.

I also wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to the United Nations Secretary General for the painstaking efforts made for ensuring the success at Nairobi.

My delegation associates itself with the statement of Sudan on behalf of the G-77 and China.

This Conference marks the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action on South-South Cooperation.

It is a valuable opportunity for a comprehensive review and to explore ways and means to further strengthen South-South Cooperation.

Mr. President,

Our world is passing through turbulent times.

We are confronted with multiple crises – the financial and economic crisis, impact of climate change, concerns on energy, and food security.

Even though developing countries are not responsible for these crises, they threaten to seriously impair our development agenda and the progress that we have made so far on the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. President,

We have a vital stake in evolving a more sustainable and equitable global economic system. An important imperative is the reform of global governance structures.

The Bretton Woods Institutions need to change their decision-making processes to give adequate vote, real voice and proper representation to developing countries to reflect contemporary economic realities.

At the UN, the General Assembly must be revitalized and act on issues of global concern. The ECOSOC should take real stock of global economic and social issues. And, the Security Council must reflect contemporary realities through an expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories and by improving its working methods.

The global development agenda has to be inclusive, going beyond the Millennium Development Goals and the Doha Financing for Development process.

In this context, I would like to emphasize the need to implement the outcomes of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, the Almaty Plan for the Landlocked Developing Countries and the Mauritius Strategy for the Small Island Developing States.

Mr. President,

India's links with Africa are civilizational and we are committed to develop a comprehensive partnership with Africa. The India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi last year was reflective of this affinity and friendship.

We are happy that for our business sector, Africa is a natural partner and numerous Indian companies have large and active ventures that contribute to the economies of both Africa and India. These ventures span critical growth

areas including information technology, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, medical sciences, renewable and non-conventional energy and remote sensing.

The Pan African E-Network project that seeks to bridge the 'digital divide' between Africa and the rest of the world is one of the most far-reaching initiatives undertaken by India.

We are also happy to see our TEAM-9 initiative with our partners in West Africa and our cooperation with NEPAD bearing fruit.

The Government of India has extended over US\$ 3 billion concessional lines of credit to countries in Africa and this figure is now enhanced to US\$ 5.4 billion for the next five years.

India has unilaterally agreed to duty-free and quota-free market access to goods from 34 Least Developed Countries in Africa.

Mr. President,

India has a unique experience in nation-building given our large, complex and most diverse setting.

As we have strived over more than sixty years since our Independence to give our people a better life, we have developed many capacities and capabilities that are critical for development and nation building. It has been our endeavour to share our experiences and knowledge with fellow developing countries.

India has partnered to mutual benefit many of the countries in our region for infrastructure development. We have been in the forefront of pushing for removal of trade barriers in our region and better connectivity.

We are happy to be able to contribute to the nation-building process underway in Afghanistan.

Recognizing that upgradation of skills, empowerment and capacity building are key development needs, India established the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation (ITEC) Programme as early as 1964. ITEC is today a major instrument and flagship programme of the Government of India for extending our technical cooperation and assistance to developing countries. It is demand-driven and response-oriented.

The ITEC Programme has, since its inception, expanded manifold and today covers 158 partner countries spread across Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and CIS countries. As part of the ITEC Programme, India allocates and funds 5000 vocational training slots every year in over 200 short, medium and long-term courses at 42 Institutes of eminence considered to be leading facilities in their field of specialization with many of them gravitating towards hi-tech areas like IT.

ITEC is also a platform for India's partnership for feasibility studies, infrastructure projects and deputation of experts.

ITEC has very wide coverage and has acquired a brand image across the developing world. The ITEC Programme fully symbolizes the true spirit of India's commitment and endeavour for South-South Cooperation.

Mr. President,

South-South Cooperation has come a long way with a remarkable rise in South-South trade, finance and investment flows over the last decade.

From 1995 onwards, South-South merchandise trade grew on an average by 13 percent, reaching 2.4 trillion dollars, or 20% of world trade in 2007.

However, the challenges continue to be daunting with poverty eradication, hunger and basic health needs still remaining unmet in many developing countries.

North-South cooperation and triangular cooperation involving the North are critical to achieving these objectives.

We urge our friends and partners in the developed world to adhere to their commitments. The long-set target of 0.7% of Gross National Income as ODA needs to be honoured as a matter of priority.

South-South Cooperation is a much broader and deeper concept than traditional North-South aid-driven cooperation. It is a cooperative partnership between developing countries embedded in the sharing of expertise, knowledge, experiences, technology, and provision of assistance based on one's national capacities and as an expression of solidarity and mutual cooperation. It is entirely voluntary in nature and furthers national development priorities with national ownership at its centre.

However, cooperation between countries of the South is neither a substitute to North-South Cooperation nor should it be used to dilute the quantum of North-South Cooperation or look at it from a traditional donor-recipient perspective.

The UN system must further South-South Cooperation and also facilitate triangular cooperation by bringing in resources from the North and harnessing Southern capacities, expertise and experience. This would also help develop capacity within the South, in the implementation process itself.

India is happy to participate in triangular cooperation and is an active participant in the Heiligendamm-L'Aquila process and through the India, Brazil and South Africa initiative, IBSA.

India has always remained steadfast in its commitment and efforts to advance the collective cause of the South, bilaterally and within the framework of regional and multilateral groupings. It is with this positive and constructive spirit that we participate in this Conference.

South-South cooperation is not a mere phrase for my country, but a way of life, an enduring commitment, a philosophy for growth and development together.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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