

Intervention by Mr. Munu Mahawar, JS[UNP] at the *High Level Segment at the 18th Governing Council Meeting of Community of Democracies on October 01, 2015*

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen

It is a great honour for me to be here today at the High Level Segment of 18th Governing Council Meeting of the Community of Democracies. Let me also take the opportunity to congratulate the delegation of the United States in convening their first meeting of the Governing Council under its Presidency.

2. True democracy, as we understand, is not merely a political ideal, but a complete social philosophy. It is a way of life and as such, it includes all the social, political, religious, moral and economic aspects. India is wedded to this philosophy. India as one of the founding members of the Community of Democracies and also as the world's largest practising democracy is proud of its democratic traditions and history. We have deep rooted democratic practices and governance mechanisms, nurtured over the last seven decades, which have positively influenced the healthy development of structures and institutions towards participatory democracy.

3. In the global arena, the ideals of democracy and democratic governance have always been subjected to constant persecution. Today, rising extremism and its concomitant tool of terrorism pose a clear and present danger to our way of existence, more than ever. We need to confront these dangers with a much greater resolve.

4. In this regard, there is a need to encourage governments around the world to follow democratic values and practices in letter and spirit and, thereby, ensure a comprehensive development framework for its citizens. This will go a long way in improving lives of the poorest of poor.

5. We are of the view that the growth of democratic institutions and values necessarily ensure and protect fundamental rights of citizens and act as a barrier to powers that try to use them for terrorism related activities. Therefore, a democratic country that has just emerged from turbulence needs support in its efforts to effectively and legitimately ensure that its citizens enjoy fruits of democracy without any hindrance. Such a process should be interactive and inclusive and consistent with democratic values.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. We acknowledge and support the role of CoD in preserving and encouraging spread of democratic values around the globe. We are also confident that under the Presidency of US, the work of Community of Democracies will become more broad based and even more active.

7. The principles adopted and reflected in various declarations of the Community of Democracies are a reaffirmation of our democratic values and principles. India has always extended a helping hand to fellow democracies and is always ready to share its own experiences.

8. We have regular international programmes on elections and parliamentary practices and procedures. Our Election Commission has established the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management, which has been developed as an advanced resource centre of learning, research, training and extension on participatory democracy and election management. Its mission includes work for promoting democratic values and practices, enhancing voter education and awareness and developing human resource and capacities for efficient conduct of free and fair elections in India and for developing mutually beneficial partnerships as well as collaborations with other countries.

9. Side by side, we also need to reflect on the need to democratise the international governance architecture. The 70th anniversary year of the establishment of the United Nations in 2015 provides us with the opportunity to confront contemporary governance challenges and seek redressal through commensurate reforms accordingly. In this regard, we believe the United Nations and its Security Council need to be more representative and reflective of the present geo-political realities, reflecting today's world that has come a long way since 1945.

10. In the end, I would like to reiterate that our Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been working for strengthening of democratic governance aimed at economic and social development. Our governance touchstone remains inclusive growth. We are using policy initiatives such as *Digital India*, *Skill India* and the *National Mission for Financial Inclusion* to improve targeting of benefits to the needy, make the delivery of services more efficient, catalyse development and increase citizen participation in governance, and, to promote financial inclusion and empowerment. It remains our endeavour to further strengthen grassroots democracy and improve focus on enhancing deliverance of public services through a wide spectrum of developmental schemes and projects.

11. India also remains fully committed in working within the Community of Democracies, in sharing our experiences, so as to continue to play its role of a responsible and mature democracy and promoting our common ideas and programmes.

Thank you.
