

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE**  
**AT THE RAPORTEURS SUMMARIZATION OF THE GLOBAL**  
**ROUNDTABLE ON INCLUSIVE INNOVATIONS**

RBCC: Mar 5, 2017

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Good evening, ladies and gentlemen!

1. To begin with, let me compliment the distinguished national and international delegates for participating in this important global round-table on inclusive innovations. I have had the benefit to listen to Dr. Francis Gurry, Director General of WIPO, and Dr. R.A. Mashelkar, Chairperson of NIF, today. I am thankful to both of them for sharing their knowledge and insights on this relevant theme of inclusive innovations. This topic, to my mind, is pertinent for any nation pursuing an inclusive development agenda.
2. India is a vibrant democracy. The preamble to our constitution proclaims to secure to the citizens: JUSTICE, social, economic and political; LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and FRATERNITY to assure the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation. Equality and freedom has no meaning

unless it is accompanied with opportunity (to realize one's aspirations and potential) and enjoyment (of benefits of growth and development). Development is real when it is inclusive; when the last person feels being a part of the narrative of progress.

3. Innovation has a strong linkage with development. Particularly, grassroots innovation of which India has a long tradition is important in alleviating the day-to-day problems of human lives. The stimuli to innovate are many – from basic survival to fuelling of growth. A healthy eco-system can harness the innovative potential of the population. While I am optimistic about the prospects of inclusive innovation in our country, I do have a few concerns, which I want to share on this platform.

Ladies and gentlemen:

4. The quality of education in our schools, colleges and universities has scope for improvement. Education is the seed of a nation's destiny. Without a strong foundation of education, ability of communities to benefit from other infrastructural resources for development remains limited. I am told that NIF has scouted thousands of innovators and traditional knowledge holders, many of whom did not allow lack of education to come in their way of

innovating new solutions. Undoubtedly, with better tools and better access to education, they may have done even better. We need to bring an empathetic stress on inclusive innovation in our learning modules in education.

5. Many central institutions of higher learning – about 86 of them - have opened innovation clubs. These clubs search for inclusive innovations in the hinterland of their institutions; spread the innovations developed; invite innovators to classrooms or labs to understand their motivation, and identify unmet needs of society and try to address them through their projects. Reciprocity and responsibility must become an inalienable part of learning exchanges between the formal and the informal sectors. I urge the educational planners and thinkers to consider transformation of pedagogic approach towards learning.
6. I have had the opportunity to interact with grassroots innovators on various occasions. Seeing their innovations make me hopeful that in the near future, we will be able to make the life of people, especially the disadvantaged sections, more comfortable.

Ladies and gentlemen:

7. The role of science and technology in leveraging inclusive innovations is evident when we see the pivotal contributions made by the Indian Space Research Organization. Helping fishermen in high seas, farmers through weather forecasts and students through dissemination of educational content has been made possible through space technology applications at grassroots level. Early investment in science and technology has given us rich dividends. We need to continue providing impetus to science education and research in our institutions.
  
8. Developing an innovation culture is crucial. The INSPIRE-MANAK programme of the Department of Science and Technology envisages the mobilization of one million ideas from half a million schools at the rate of two ideas per school. This initiative will help build a spirit of creativity and ingenuity amongst the young students.

Friends:

9. To make grassroots innovations more inclusive, we need a strong mechanism for dispersal and quick adoption of ideas. I am told that many public-sector scientists do not charge any cost for the time used in validating and value-adding grassroots

innovations. Many intellectual property firms also do the same. Let me compliment them for their service, which has helped in harnessing IPR support for local communities and grassroots innovators. The concept of Technology Commons used by NIF allowing fellow community members to use innovative ideas of others for non-commercial purposes has also helped in wider dissemination of innovations. These positives should continue unabated.

10. The benefit of innovation will accrue when an idea gets converted into a useful product. For that, a strong environment for starting new enterprises is necessary. Micro-venture finance and not just micro finance will help usher in entrepreneurial undertakings at the grassroots. The Atal Innovation Mission has started tinkering labs in schools. Many incubators have been set up by government departments such as science and technology, and bio-technology. While these are steps in the right direction, we should simultaneously think of popularizing the *in situ* incubation model of innovation enterprises. This would enable young people to stay with families back home in villages and small towns, and still pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations.

11. The emphasis on incubation of start-ups and promoting entrepreneurship at an early stage is a welcome development. However, we should expand the opportunities for students to start new technology and social innovation based inclusive businesses.

Ladies and gentlemen:

12. The government has started several platforms under the *Digital India* programme to directly connect with citizens and receive their feedback. This is a form of participative governance. I see this as a healthy trend. It provides clues about how to make public services more responsive to the rising aspirations of our people. We should not let scale become an impediment to sustainability. There are still challenges which are location or niche specific. They need solutions too. Public policy must provide incentives for addressing such unmet social needs for the betterment of our nation.
13. With these few words, I conclude. I thank all the delegates once again. I hope you have the time to visit the blooming Mughal Gardens while you are here. Spread the spirit of “*Vasudev kutumbakam*”, ‘the whole world is a family’, in your social and policy networks. Remember that no country can embark upon its own developmental path without including the development of the less privileged.

14. I wish you all a happy spring and joyful engagement with the grassroots innovators in making this world a happier, healthier and harmonious place.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

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