

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE AT THE BANQUET HOSTED FOR THE HEADS OF  
STATE / GOVERNMENT / DELEGATION ATTENDING THE  
THIRD INDIA AFRICA FORUM SUMMIT

Rashtrapati Bhavan: Oct 29, 2015

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1. It is a singular honour for me to welcome all of you, Heads of State and Government of Africa, here today, at the heart of the Indian Republic. I welcome you not only as leaders of proud nations but as friends and brothers. India welcomes you not only with open arms but with an open heart.
2. This is a historic evening; it is a memorable moment. A century ago when the construction of this building you see before you began, it would have been difficult to imagine such a moment. It would have been difficult to imagine that India as well as so many African nations would discard their colonial chains, throw away the imperial yoke and one day stand together here to celebrate freedom, democracy and human dignity.

*Dear Friends,*

3. India is honoured to host the third India-Africa Forum Summit in Delhi and I would like to thank each and every one of you for being part of this Summit. It is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's drive which has brought us together for this event. I am supremely confident that the work done during the Summit, the fashioning of a collective vision for the future of our people will be critical in defining the direction and contours of our political and economic engagement. Given that India and Africa are home to a third of the world's

population, this engagement is certain to have an impact on the future of sustainable development of the world.

4. Excellencies, the Third India-Africa Forum Summit has been a great success due to your participation and deliberations. Your shared vision and guidance reflected in the two documents that have been adopted by you at the Summit encapsulate the India-Africa strategic partnership as a unique example of South –South Co-operation.

*Friends,*

5. Ours is a qualitatively different, infinitely richer relationship. We feel the depth of this relationship in our hearts. The bonds between Africa and India are not those which are fashioned by words and statements; these bonds have been forged in the furnace of struggle - the struggle for freedom and independence, the struggle for equality and dignity. We are close because we know what it is to suffer, we know what it means not to be master of one's own destiny. We know what it means to see the flower of our youth languish in colonial prisons. We know what it is to live in poverty, disease and darkness even while our own rich resources are plundered by others.

*Dear Friends,*

6. India and Africa have special bonds because we understand human history not only in the post-colonial sense but from ancient times. India's ancient civilization, its spiritual heritage, its accomplishments of the human spirit in art and culture give her a unique standpoint from which we look upon the passing world. This is even more true for the continent of Africa, often known as the cradle of civilization, the land where the earliest forms of life were formed, whose ancient rocks contain the secrets of evolution, the land where the human beings as we know ourselves today, first learned to walk on two feet.

*Friends,*

7. India and Africa understand each other because our lands are the very definition of diversity. Be it physical diversity - from the snows of Kilimanjaro to the deep Sahara - or the multiplicity of religions, ethnicities, tribes, languages, dialects, and cultures. Africa has it all. So indeed does India. For Africa and India, diversity is our lifeblood; it enriches us and makes us even stronger. It ensures that we value coexistence, dialogue, mutual understanding and peace. These are perspectives on the human development that India and Africa share, these are perspectives that we can together contribute to the rest of the world for handling conflicts and crises.
8. Dear friends: The difficult decades may well be behind us, the decades of colonial rule and cruel oppression, of economic deprivation and racial discrimination. But the challenges are far from gone; they have changed. We have still to overcome poverty and disease, terrorism and drug trafficking, lack of education and training.
  - 8a. Terrorism knows no boundaries or borders and has no ideology except that of wanton destruction. India and Africa must work together to address this threat and strive to strengthen the international regime against terrorism.
9. I was the Minister of External Affairs when we started the India-Africa Forum Summit in April 2008. I vividly recall our collective enthusiasm and joy at the inaugural event that elevated India's traditional warm and friendly ties with Africa to a new level in a structured format. The Third India-Africa Forum Summit is a demonstration of the importance we attach to our relation with Africa. The active participation of all countries of Africa at this Forum reflects the desire of member countries to build an enduring partnership between our nations and our peoples.

10. India and Africa are neighbours linked together by the blue of the Indian Ocean. Our partnership is anchored in the fundamental principles of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit. India commits to assist Africa in charting its own course through infrastructure development, institution building and technical and vocational skill development. India's development partnership with Africa complements the various priorities set out in the Agenda 2063 vision document adopted by the African Union.

*Dear Friends,*

11. An area of cooperation very close to my heart and pertinent to our interaction is 'Agriculture'. I remember well the days before India had its 'green revolution' and we were not self-sufficient in food. In those days, we literally lived from "ship to mouth". Hunger and food scarcity under any circumstance is unacceptable and should lead all of us into collective action. Though India today is self-sufficient in food production, the land available for agriculture is continuously decreasing due to rising population. Africa is, fortunately, blessed with large areas of fertile, cultivable land. It is relevant to recall here the words of Kwameh Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana, who had rightly pointed out that "*the Congo Basin alone can produce enough food crops to satisfy the requirements of nearly half the population of the whole world*". Agricultural growth is not only important in addressing Africa's quest of food security but it also remains a key component of Africa's overall development. I am sure that the interactions you and your delegations had in the past few days would have discussed collaboration in the areas of increasing productivity; smart agriculture; environment-friendly farm mechanization; promotion of gene pool and better seeds, and other modern agricultural concepts.

*Dear Friends,*

12. As we have stood together during the days of struggle, so too will we stand together in this challenging dawn of development. India is ready to share its democratic experience, its agricultural expertise, its capacity building potential, its healthcare institutions, its peacekeepers with our partners from Africa. Once again we are determined that our struggle will be based on principles - the principles of equality and partnership, of mutual benefit, of human dignity. For India and Africa, guided by the vision of Mahatma Gandhi who belonged to both, that is the only path.
  
13. With these words, I once again welcome you to this evening of celebration of India-Africa relations—and the success of the Third India-Africa Forum Summit.

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