

## **RM'S SPEECH**

### **1<sup>ST</sup> INDIA AFRICA DEFENCE MINISTERS CONCLAVE, 2020**

Excellencies, my brothers and sisters from Africa, a very good afternoon

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the first ever India Africa Defence Ministers Conclave that is being organized on the sidelines of DEFEXPO INDIA 2020.

The ties between Africa and India, go back in history. We are connected by our ancient maritime links and our colonial past and looking forward, we are united in our quest for peace, security, and stability and economic growth.

“Silence The Guns: Creating conducive conditions for African Development” is African Union’s theme of the year. It aims to achieve a “conflict free Africa, prevent genocide, make peace a reality for all and rid the continent of wars, violent conflicts, human rights violations and humanitarian disasters”. This vision of the African Union for peace and security aligns with Prime Minister Modi’s vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the Region) for the Indo-Pacific region. This vision seeks to deepen economic and security cooperation with our maritime neighbours. It is grounded in the basic belief that it is only through collaboration and cooperation that the cause of peace and prosperity shall be advanced.

Prime Minister Modi on his state visit to Uganda in 2018 had enunciated 10 guiding principles for India's engagement with Africa. Foremost of these is that Africa will be at the top of our priorities. We will continue to intensify and deepen our engagement which will be sustained and regular. It will be a partnership guided by your priorities. It will be on terms that will be comfortable to you and will liberate your potential rather than constraining your future. More specifically on the defence cooperation, these include strengthening cooperation and mutual capabilities in combating terrorism and extremism, keeping our cyberspace safe and secure and supporting the UN in advancing and keeping peace. The principles also include working with African nations to keep the oceans open and free for the benefit of all nations. Cooperation and not competition shall be the guiding force in this endeavour.

Defence and security cooperation has been an important aspect of the Indo- Africa engagement. India's security relations with Africa have centered on providing training to African Service personnel, participation in United Nations peacekeeping efforts on the continent and maritime cooperation.

Over the years, India has trained officers from several African countries at Indian Military training institutions, including some of the prominent leaders of the continent. India has also provided support for creation of military training infrastructure in some of the countries. Our military training teams have also been deputed to some of the African nations to

impart training to their personnel as per their need and requirement. These initiatives have helped build people to people contact and cement our association. We look forward to continue collaboration in peace and security through exchange of experts and capacity building.

We are proud of the contribution and sacrifices of our officers and men in the UN peacekeeping operations in the continent. Starting from the first mission in Congo in 1960 till the present, India has participated in almost a dozen peace keeping operations. We are committed to maintaining these efforts and also contribute in capacity building through the Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK) in New Delhi.

We had the first Africa- India Field Training Exercise - 2019 (AFINDEX – 19) in March 2019 in India which saw participation from 17 African countries. The exercise demonstrated the commitment and capabilities of the participating nations in working together.

Excellencies, the oceans contribute significantly, to the livelihoods of our people. Safe secure seas are pre-requisite for development of Blue economy. India recognizes our common security challenges here. These include, transnational crimes of piracy, trafficking of drugs, arms and humans and illegal fishing. In addition, there is growing threat of terrorism and violent extremism. These challenges call for stronger partnerships for capacity building, information sharing and surveillance.

In recent years, spurred by the Prime Ministers vision of SAGAR, India has enhanced maritime cooperation with the Indian Ocean littoral states in Africa. Indian Navy has been actively engaged in anti-piracy operations, surveillance and humanitarian and disaster relief operations in the Indian Ocean Region. Indian Navy has been deployed in the Gulf of Aden for over a decade in anti piracy operations. 75 Indian Naval warships deployed in the Gulf of Aden since 2008, have escorted more than 3440 ships.

In 2008, Indian Navy spearheaded the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) construct which has enabled constructive dialogue amongst the navies of the region. The dialogue has been a successful initiative in finding “regional solutions” to ‘regional problems’.

We have also launched the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) at Gurugram. The centre aims to address the maritime challenges in the IOR by sharing information towards building a common maritime domain awareness. This requires IOR littorals to have adequate processed information of their respective maritime domains, through coastal radar chains and maritime information centres. We would be willing to share our experience and expertise in this area.

Our increased engagement in the region has enabled us to be the first responders in providing humanitarian assistance in times of crisis like cyclone Idai in Mozambique and more recently in Madagascar. I would

like to assure you all excellencies that you can count on India as an all weather friend who you will find beside you in times of need.

The rapid strides made by the Indian defence technology, industry - both public and private, and defence R&D has opened up new vistas for cooperation to take our engagement to the next level. Indian defence manufacturing companies are now partnering with some of the leading names in the business and are part of their global supply chains. India is geared up to provide Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs), Fast Interceptor Boats, body and vehicle armour, Night Vision Goggles (NVGs), Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), Dornier aircraft, and arms and ammunition to our African counterparts. The Indian defence industry has also warmed up to the Ministry's overtures through initiatives like iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence) and Make-II Procurement Procedure, for small, innovative solutions to a plethora of defence needs and challenges, and the African countries would do well to explore these advanced yet affordable solutions. It is heartening to observe that there has been an increased presence of African delegations at Indian defence exhibitions such as Defence Expo and Aero India in the recent years.

We look forward to deeper cooperation in the domain of defence industry including through investment, joint ventures in defence equipment, software, digital defence, research and development, provisioning of defence equipment, spares and their maintenance on

sustainable and mutually beneficial terms. I hope that the DEFEXPO will provide you an opportunity to see these capabilities first hand.

Excellencies, our partnership with Africa is an open partnership with all the possibilities and avenues for collaboration from our side being open to you to choose from and decide as per your priorities, interests and needs, and at your pace. With the benefit of our own experience and expertise we are willing to support you in your efforts towards seeking peace and prosperity for a better tomorrow for the region.

Once again, I thank you all for honouring our invitation and being here today on this momentous occasion of the first ever India Africa Defence Ministers Conclave. We have made a beginning here today and I am confident that together we shall take it forward. I look forward to a meaningful round of deliberation today, which will throw up new ideas and suggestions towards further strengthening our engagement.

I wish you all a pleasant stay in India and fruitful time at the DefExpo 2020.