

STATEMENT BY DR. SHASHI THAROOR, MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, ON NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT: PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT AT THE 64TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 20, 2009



Mr. President,

I am happy to participate in today's Joint Debate on New Partnership for Africa's Development. Allow me to thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report on Implementation and International Support for New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the other reports prepared for this joint debate.

Mr. President,

India's ties with Africa are historic. Trade across the Indian Ocean has linked us for hundreds of years. For the people of India, Africa is also the land of awakening of the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi.

In the past, we have shared the pain of subjugation and the joy of freedom and liberation. We have worked shoulder to shoulder in the fight against apartheid and racial discrimination. India was at the vanguard of the struggle against colonialism, apartheid and racial discrimination - a struggle that helped transform the lives of millions of people in Africa and Asia.

During our march together, we have traversed similar paths, shared similar values and cherished the same dreams. Our long and historic relationship has now evolved into a sustainable and enduring partnership.

Mr. President,

The Secretary General in his report New Partnership for Africa's Development: 7th Consolidated Progress Report Implementation and International Support has underscored that international cooperation is vital for Africa's development. The report emphasizes the need for concerted and urgent action by international development partners to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the global financial and economic crisis and help the African countries in their progress towards implementation of NEPAD and realization of the MDGs. The report also highlights India's contribution towards Africa's development in the context of South-South cooperation.

Mr. President,

India has a long-standing, close and multi-layered relationship with Africa. A vibrant India and a resurgent Africa are witnessing an intensification of relations and growing convergence of interests in their common quest for sustainable economic growth and development. Our partnership encompasses priority sectors integral to the developmental goals of Africa in the 21st century. India is committed to work together with Africa in accordance with the priorities of the continent. Priority areas of cooperation include infrastructure development, capacity-building, agriculture, health and food security and technology cooperation. We have accorded high priority to development of economic infrastructure including railways, IT, telecom and power.

The First India-Africa Forum Summit held in Delhi in April, 2008 was a major milestone in India's engagement with Africa. The Delhi Declaration and the Africa-India Framework for Cooperation adopted during the Summit highlighted our shared vision and world view. Taken together, these provide a sound foundation for the intensification of our engagement in the years to come.

India has so far extended over US\$ 3 billion of concessional lines of credit to countries in Africa. During the India-Africa Forum Summit, India also decided to enhance the available concessional lines of credit for Africa to US\$ 5.4 billion for the next five years.

Since the inception of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme in 1964, capacity building and human resource development in Africa has been an area of high priority for the Government of India. The ITEC programme has benefited thousands of experts and students from Africa who came for training courses in professional institutions in India. These courses cover diverse fields such as agriculture and agro processing, entrepreneurship development, tool design, small business creation, promotion of rural industries and information technology. We have increased the number of training slots for African countries from 1100 to 1600.

In addition, several thousand African students are currently studying in Indian universities and colleges. We have also doubled the number of scholarships for the African countries to 500.

Over the next five to six years India will also be undertaking in Africa, on a grant basis, projects in critical areas such as higher and vocational education, science, IT, agriculture and renewable energy. A sum of US\$500 million has been allocated for this endeavour.

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. Already 42 countries have joined this programme which is intended to provide E-services with priority on tele-education and tele-medicine services and VVIP connectivity by satellite and fibre optic network amongst the Heads of State of all 53 countries. The Project would give major benefits to Africa in capacity building through skill and knowledge development of students, medical specialists and for medical consultation.

Mr. President,

India has been actively engaged with NEPAD since the very beginning. The Government of India announced a line of credit to NEPAD of US \$ 300 million during the India-Africa Forum Summit. This line of credit, is in addition to the US \$ 200 million of lines of credit to NEPAD extended earlier in 2002.

Indian private sector is increasingly engaged in Africa. Indian companies have made large investments in Africa in industry, agriculture, services, human resource development and infrastructure. India's trade with Africa has been growing rapidly. India's bilateral trade with Africa was over 36 billion dollars in 2008-09, which represented an almost six-fold increase in as many years. We look forward to working with our African partners to take these trade and investment levels to newer heights.

Mr. President,

The Secretary General in his report on NEPAD has called for the long-overdue

successful outcome of the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations. At the India Africa Forum Summit, India and Africa had decided to work together on pressing global issues of shared interests and concerns including the WTO such as the issue of cotton subsidies. India has made a unilateral announcement of duty free and quota free market access to goods from 34 Least Developed Countries in Africa. This covers 94% of India's total tariff lines and provides preferential market access on tariff lines that comprise 92.5% of global exports of all LDCs.

Mr. President,

An important factor in addressing the causes of conflict and contributing to durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report, is the commitment of the international community, including United Nations organizations, to allocate increased financial, human and technical resources for the regional strategies .

On its part, India has been extensively involved in peacekeeping efforts in Africa over the past six decades. Presently, India has over 7000 peacekeepers serving in Africa, including a 5000 strong contingent in the Democratic Republic of Congo. India's first full all-female formed police unit is currently deployed in Liberia. In addition to peacekeeping, this unit has been successful in reaching out to the most vulnerable sections of the society i.e. women and children and in inspiring women who have so often been victim of war to see themselves also as sources of soccour and strength in this recently war torn society.

As a founder member of the Peacebuilding Commission, India remains actively engaged with the work of the Commission. The UNSG's report mentions that 92% of the Peacebuilding Fund-allocated funds have gone to African countries. We are hopeful that with the revision of the terms of reference for the Peacebuilding Fund, the efficiency and effectiveness of the Fund will be further improved.

Mr. President,

Africa's fight against Malaria is dealt with in Secretary General's report transmitting the WHO's report on "2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, particularly in Africa". It is a matter of deep regret that more than one million malarial deaths still occur each year, when the disease is preventable, treatable and perfectly curable.

While we are happy to note that a number of preventive measures, such as distribution of treated mosquito nets, are being undertaken on a much larger scale, it also remains a fact that the developing world's ability to combat public health crises of this nature at times has been circumscribed under the pretext of intellectual property rights. Access to affordable medicines is a fundamental part of the right to health, and this has even been recognized by the TRIPS regime. Unfortunately, this remains more in the realm of theory than practice.

The Africa-India Framework for Cooperation 2008 includes capacity building programmes for medical and health specialists to tackle pandemics like malaria, filarial, polio, HIV and TB.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would like to state that India envisions an Africa that is self-reliant, economically vibrant and at peace with itself and the world. While highlighting the vitality of African continent, the first Prime Minister of India, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, had said, "Of one thing there can be no doubt, and that is the vitality of the people of Africa. Therefore, with the vitality of her people and the great resources available in this great continent, there can be no doubt that the future holds a great promise for the people of Africa."

It is this promise that our Partnership with Africa seeks to fulfill. India will offer its fullest cooperation to harness the great potential of the African people for the cause of Africa's progress and development.

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