

SPEECH BY MR. S.M. KRISHNA, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER, AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SYMPOSIUM OF SOUTH AFRICA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIGHT AGAINST RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA [IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS] ON SEPTEMBER 22, 2011

**Your Excellency President Zuma, Your Excellency President Jonathan, Your Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, Fellow Ministers and Distinguished Guests,**

It is a matter of pride for me to join other leaders and fellow Ministers in celebrating the forthcoming centenary of the African National Congress in January 2012. We in India fully share the joy of our South African brothers and sisters in celebrating their great victory over racism and colonialism.

The ANC was at the forefront of one of the greatest political struggles of history. Its campaign against racist oppression and injustice was a long and difficult one. It was only the vision of great leaders like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo and the enormous sacrifices of the South African people cutting across racial boundaries that ultimately ensured that truth and justice prevailed.

**Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,**

I would like to take this opportunity to pay homage to the great leaders of the ANC and the many unnamed South Africans whose sacrifices for freedom and dignity have made it possible for us to celebrate this historic moment today.

The ANC's triumph against institutionalized racism of apartheid was celebrated as much in India as in South Africa itself. Indeed, the success of the ANC was at once the success of all people across the world who have suffered under colonial and racist oppression.

The ANC's greatness is not only in that it successfully and peacefully overthrew the apartheid state, but in that it managed to go beyond this by building a new democratic South Africa based on non-racialism and equal respect for all its people. The foresight of Nelson Mandela and his policy of national reconciliation has helped the ANC to forge a new rainbow nation out of the bitter hatred and division sown by apartheid.

We in India are proud of the success of South Africa's democratic transition and its emergence as a leading nation in the world. Indeed, a very special bond unites our two nations.

### **Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,**

The Indian freedom struggle overthrew the mightiest empire of its time and did so peacefully. This would not have been possible without the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, leading us in Satyagraha. South Africa is the cradle of Satyagraha. It is there that Mahatma Gandhi first practiced ahimsa when confronted by the politics of evil. It is South Africa that turned Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a young lawyer, into the Mahatma.

India's commitment to the battle waged by the people of South Africa and by the ANC against apartheid was total. My country could not and did not remain indifferent to this crusade for freedom, equality and human dignity. In a message addressed to the South African people in 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru said that India would fight for the rights and honour of all South Africans, whatever may be the burden that we may have to carry. He promised to fight it in India, in South Africa and in the international assemblies. And fight it, we did.

Here, I would like to quote what the great Nelson Mandela has said about India: "This country and my own have long and cherished bonds of friendship. India shall always hold a place of honour in the ranks of our international solidarity partners. For it was India who first took up the case for us against apartheid at the United Nations. It was India who always stood at the head of the international community's moral, political and material support to our cause to liberate our country from the bondage of racial oppression and racist rule. Today democratic South Africa has friends and supporters all over the world. We can today count amongst our allies some of the most powerful countries in the world. And we are very grateful for that support and friendship. We can, however, not forget for one moment those that stood by us when it was neither fashionable nor easy to do so. Amongst those, as I have said, India takes pride of place."

We are also greatly proud of the role of our Indian brothers and sisters who made South Africa their home in this great struggle. The Natal Indian Congress and the

Transvaal Indian Congress, both of which owe their origins to the Mahatma, stood shoulder to shoulder with the African National Congress in its endeavours. South Africans of Indian origin contributed significantly to the ANC and they continue to do so today.

### **Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,**

It is a matter of pride for us that we have converted this rich legacy into a thriving bilateral relationship. Our nation-building efforts have been guided by a common philosophy that stresses tolerance and respect for diversity.

It is thus no surprise that we stand for principles and the rule of law in our respective nations and in international relations. We are natural partners and our partnership extends beyond the bilateral. Our common aspirations and common values unite us in the UN Security Council, in G-20, in the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) forum, and in BRICS.

This is the century of Asia and Africa. The new dawn that the freedom fighters of India and the African National Congress dreamed about is upon us. We walked together in the walk to freedom; we now continue this journey into a better future for our two nations and for the entire world.

Thank you.

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