

PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION

Ambassadorial-level virtual meeting

“The impact of COVID-19 in the Lake Chad Basin”

INDIA STATEMENT

by

Ashish Sharma, First Secretary

9 September 2020

Thank you, Mr. Chair

Please allow me to congratulate you on assuming the Chair of Peacebuilding Commission and for organizing this meeting on the pressing subject and for making detailed opening remarks. We appreciate the insightful and thorough briefings on the subject by the distinguished briefers.

2. India has long-standing and ever-expanding cooperation with African countries. Our partnership is focused on “Africa-owned” and “Africa-led” development which is based on mutual respect, mutual trust, equality and solidarity. The model of our cooperation is demand driven, consultative and participative, focusing on building capacities in terms of skilled manpower and institutions involving local resources and traditional knowledge.

Mr. Chair

3. We are extremely concerned with the ongoing humanitarian and peacebuilding challenges in the Lake Chad Basin region which have been further aggravated by COVID-19 pandemic. Intensification of violence by extremist groups in the region is highly condemnable. Since the ongoing violence coupled with the pandemic is exacerbating the humanitarian crisis, it is important that the conflicting parties in the region immediately respond to the call of the Chairperson of Africa Union Commission to immediately stop the fighting and engage in dialogue.

4. The pandemic has intensified the challenges faced by refugees and IDPs. Reinforced regional and international cooperation is paramount to enable delivery of humanitarian assistance to this vulnerable section. We appreciate the increased engagement of United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) with the Lake Chad Basin Commission to support local authorities in their efforts to tackle the pandemic.

5. Lack of information and awareness about the pandemic is also a major challenge. Dissemination of timely, verified and scientific information about the precautions,

symptoms and treatment among the communities living in the region should be a priority. At the same time, it is important to check spread of misinformation and rumors about the pandemic which has the potential to create avoidable unrest among the communities.

Mr. Chair

6. India calls for greater assistance to be provided by the international community to assist the region in overcoming the challenges posed by the pandemic. In the month of May, India had dispatched COVID relief medical supplies to the region to fight the pandemic. We are in constant contact with our African partners for ensuring further medical assistance.

7. In line with our cooperative development model, India is also actively engaged with the region in areas such as agriculture and food processing, rural electrification and power transmission, low cost housing and resilient constructions and potable water. We have most recently funded a project in the Kanem and Lake Chad regions to reverse the cycle of land degradation by training 400 farmers in techniques to combat desertification.

Mr. Chair

8. COVID-19 pandemic has posed severe challenges before the world, in general and the Lake Chad Basic region, in particular. We call upon the international community to come together to support peacebuilding activities in the region.

9. My delegation is of firm belief that in order to achieve long-lasting peace and stability in the region, UN and regional organizations shall strive to provide an enabling environment to the competing parties to initiate dialogues and discussions for overcoming their conflicts.

10. India supports international and regional cooperation with local ownership for implementation of humanitarian, developmental and peacebuilding initiatives.

I thank you, Mr. Chair