

**Statement by Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin
Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations
& Leader of the Indian Delegation to NAM Ministerial Meeting
Caracas, Venezuela
21 July 2019**

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a matter of immense pleasure for me to be amongst some of India's longest standing friends at this Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

2. I thank the Government and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the gracious hospitality and arrangements made for all of us. Over the last 3 years, Venezuela has made an extraordinary effort in leading our movement through some of the most turbulent times that we have witnessed. This meeting is a fitting finale. We thank Venezuela for its contribution to our common cause.

Mr. Chairman,

3. The world we inhabit today is starkly different from when some of our leaders first met in Bandung in 1955 to formulate the founding principles of our movement. Back then, our movement helped usher in a new philosophy for developing countries, many of who were emerging from long years of colonialism. It brought to the centre stage an international culture of justice and peace and an emphasis on promoting mutual interest, solidarity and respect for national sovereignty.

4. Today the imperatives that drew us together in our formative years have largely been met. Some goals though remain unfulfilled. Our hopes for their fulfilment, such as our support for the cause of Palestine, shall continue. That quest remains constant even as much of the world around us has changed.

Mr. Chairman,

5. We face serious challenges of an interdependent world. Threats that respect no borders confront us all, wherever we are. They transcend capacities of each of us to surmount them, individually.

6. Climate Change has become a pressing emergency; environmental challenges are an urgent reality; pandemics threaten the accrued gains of global health; terrorism has expanded alarmingly; humanitarian nightmares are playing out repetitively; technological innovation is driving economies, societies and individual responses into uncharted territories in a networked world; cyber security threats and the uneven impact of frontier technologies are causing unfathomable turbulence; development concerns, however, remain paramount for the vast majority of the world's population.

7. We live in times when more, and not less, collaborative and cooperative efforts are needed for managing the opportunities and challenges that we face. Common answers to each of these global issues requires effective multilateralism. No amount of coercion or unilateral measures can resolve our primary concerns.

8. The NAM has a glorious past, however, how it will be perceived in the future will be defined by how we address the defining challenges of our times - climate change, digital technologies and terrorism, as well as how we reform existing multilateral institutions to our needs.

Mr. Chairman,

9. Climate Change is an existential issue. Record rise in land and ocean temperatures, sea levels and greenhouse gas concentration are having an impact so broad and complex that all our policy and technology ingenuity needs to be brought to bear. Distribution of global emissions reinforces the need for broad multilateral cooperation in adapting and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

10. Terrorism not only kills our citizens, but also seeks to disrupt societies by undermining our ability to attain our development goals. Unfortunately, all our talk about combating the scourge of terrorism has not been matched by actions. Terrorists continue to operate with great impunity and greater inhumanity. As terrorists have collapsed borders, our collective response at countering terrorism must transcend from ad hoc and crisis-orientated reaction towards building standing structures intended to be durable and insulated from rhetoric. We, as NAM countries, need to take the lead as it is our citizens that stand to lose the most from the lack of coordinated and coherent responses.

11. The spread of digital technologies has not only revolutionized our ability to communicate with others and to share and access knowledge, but has also offered much needed solutions for ending extreme poverty; to promoting inclusive economic growth and decent work; and to achieving universal literacy and doubling the productivity of small farmers. The economic impact of the resulting employment shift needs to be understood. To capture the power of digital technologies, there is a need to cooperate on the broader ecosystems that enable digital technologies to be used in an inclusive manner. Basic norms regarding frontier technologies need to be formulated. Advances in AI are also being used in weapons development in the form of autonomous systems. Digital technologies provide the NAM community, a unique opportunity to collaborate in shaping our future.

Mr. Chairman,

12. NAM needs to be in the vanguard of those addressing the primary issues of our times that cry for global cooperation, rather than become a platform for venting bilateral grievances between members.

13. Individual members need to ponder before turning upon fellow members by raising -

- Issues, which are not on the agenda;
- Issues, which are not part of the discussions of the outcome document in any manner;
- Issues, which find no resonance in the wider membership;
- Issues, which contravene NAM traditions.

14. Regrettably, one delegation attempted this yesterday. That no other member is responsive to such a self-serving narrative is a telling rejoinder that NAM never was and never can be a platform for pursuits aimed at undermining the territorial integrity of a State by another State.

15. Even as we call for more effective multilateralism, we need to introspect, reform and revitalise the current arrangements of our movement, so as to enable us to pursue a focused, positive and transformative agenda going forward.

16. Sadly, today our inertia is considerable. Even when it is clear that collective action is required, we steer clear from action, pleading consensus is required for change. Our methodology of discussion and decision-making needs to be re-examined and revised. Our agenda needs to be progressive and forward looking. The world is awash with new challenges. However, to effectively make a difference, we, the NAM, need to undertake a new journey. A journey which needs to begin soon. A journey that our leaders can consider and agree upon when they meet in Baku, in few months, at the 18th NAM Summit.

17. The non-aligned movement was conceived to enable developing nations to carve out autonomy of policy in a very different, but also very difficult global environment of a competition of ideologies. That environment has changed considerably. However, the need for all us to be anchored in a bedrock of commonly agreed principles, amidst the sea of turbulence that confronts us; the requirement for a shield that can enable us to face the turbulence of geopolitical uncertainties, remains today. The NAM remains that shield. How best we can make use of a grouping, so rich in its traditions and so large in its numbers, is a choice for all of us to make.

18. As one of modern India's leading figures, Swami Vivekananda once said:

“We reap what we sow;
We are the makers of our own fate;
The wind is blowing;
Those vessels whose sails are unfurled catch it and go forward on their way;
but those who have their sails furled do not catch the wind;”

19. Failure to catch the wind will leave us behind once again. If we succeed, we will all stand to benefit. Together, we can revitalize our shared institutions and strengthen and reform multilateralism, so as to maximize the prospects for a peaceful and prosperous 21st century for all our people.

I thank You Mr. Chairman.