

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI
PRANAB MUKHERJEE ON THE OCCASION OF CALL
ON BY HEAD OF MISSIONS ATTENDING THE 8TH
HOMS CONFERENCE**

Rashtrapati Bhavan: 6 May, 2017

It is a pleasure to meet you on the occasion of your annual conference.

1. At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Ministry of External Affairs, for once again hosting this Conference. It is always a very useful exercise for a Ministry to take stock, make frank assessments and enunciate policy guidelines for implementation in the ensuing period. The theme, “Smarter Diplomacy, Swifter Delivery” appropriately reflects the need of the hour. I am glad that you have had the opportunity to work on it as a group - and define the manner in which you will make this phrase your motto and also your goal.

2. I understand that you have already had three days of stimulating sessions - in which you have reviewed the full range of your responsibilities. Each of you functions in a distinct local environment as you strive to realize India’s foreign policy objectives in the country where you are posted. With each host country, you need to have a perception and historical knowledge, pursue a definite agenda and address a specific set of bilateral issues. You are expected to prioritise your endeavours – in the short, medium or long term, keeping in mind bilateral convergences and the larger - regional and global context.

3. This year, you have had to address the dramatic changes in the international political and security scenario. The traditional equations of power, 'hyper-power' and global influence have been altered in a manner that few anticipated. There is a new World Order. All of humankind is, today, challenged by compelling transnational issues that need to be urgently addressed collectively and innovatively. Whether it is drug-resistant viruses, environmental degradation, pollution and climate change - or energy , water and food security, no single nation can claim to be free of deep concerns on account of these issues.
4. The conflicts in the Middle East have become more complex. Economic migration from the African continent, followed by a mass influx from war-torn countries has brought a once-flourishing European continent to the brink. Populations across the continents are becoming inward looking and apprehensive. The starting point or causative factors matter less now – at this point it is far more pertinent to deal with the impact that these events will have on the world.
5. I have visited that region in 2015 and 2016 - and have hosted many Heads of State and Government from the Middle East, Gulf and African continent during my Presidency. All of these leaders, without exception, had a common vision – that peace in their region, imperative for development, was their highest priority. Their approaches were similar - they shared with me their belief that to succeed, any reform process adopted by them should be owned and led by their own people; and that lasting solutions could be achieved by abjuring force - and choosing tolerance , dialogue and persuasion instead.

6. Thus, I do believe that at this stage, the dynamics of the *new world order* must be well analysed and understood. As Heads of Missions, you shall have to ensure that India, as a respected and responsible player in world affairs and an emerging economic power, responds to the new challenges appropriately - to her best advantage, safeguarding her core interests at all times. I would stress that this is a moment for strategic policy making, leadership, and pursuit of an independent foreign policy - based on principle, pragmatism and the time-honored philosophy of *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam*. In this context, I cannot but marvel at the enduring relevance of the philosophy of 'unity' and 'dharma' enunciated by Swami Vivekananda and the values of truth and non-violence that Mahatma Gandhi exemplified. Sustainable development, recycling, giving back to nature, preservation of our environment, conservation of energy, harmony between peoples, tolerance among religions, equality between men and women, peace and disarmament: these principles continue to hold the key to resolving the most complex challenges that confront the world today. I do feel optimistic that sincere and closely co-ordinated efforts by the international community – through bilateral, multilateral, regional as well as sub-regional initiatives can and will eventually prevail.
7. As the world's largest democracy, we have assisted many friends in building and strengthening their democratic institutions, but we have always taken care to avoid being prescriptive. Our efforts in humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping under the aegis of the United Nations and its organs have been appreciated and valued and virtually every Member of the UN agrees with the logic of India having a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. It is also a

matter of great satisfaction that one of the pillars of India's foreign policy is the sound doctrine of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. It has served us well and has helped India to earn the trust of friends and partners across the globe. Our sincere adherence to this doctrine has also signaled that we will expect our friends and others to treat us the same way.

8. We may be a developing country but we are among the fastest growing emerging economies. I am glad that the reforms and recent initiatives of Government of India have made our economy attractive for investors and our industrial sector viable for prospective partners. I also welcome the renewed emphasis of our Government on outcomes rather than processes. Today, technology has revolutionized the way we share knowledge, do business, consult and even the way we do our diplomatic work. In some countries, it is being used to create vast capacities for eavesdropping and cyber warfare. You are, no doubt, looking at all of these issues and addressing them comprehensively.
9. I would like to most emphatically add that in addressing global and trans-national issues like maritime security, proliferation risks surrounding weapons of mass destruction, cyber security, international terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration and trans-national crime, our plan should be comprehensive and clear.
10. The world is tiring of statements and resolutions. Our efforts should be to work with like-minded nations and global institutions to swiftly generate effective solutions and implement them efficiently. Every well conceived effort will have some positive outcome. So, I, would

say take the initiative. You are out in the field and your efforts and input are critical.

11. Many of you have met me on various occasions and briefed me on our government's dialogues and initiatives with your host countries, the issues and bilateral agenda - based on common aspirations. I am aware that you are working in challenging circumstances. Most of you have small teams. While visiting your capitals I have often noticed our Missions stretching resources to use them optimally. I congratulate you all for managing so well.
12. In your consular, visa and passport services as well as your interaction with the Indian Diaspora, I am glad that you accord due priority the Indian community. Whether it is persons of Indian origin, expatriates, tourists or businessmen, they all consider the Indian Embassy and the Indian Ambassador to be their own. From Papua New Guinea to Belarus, and Ivory Coast to Finland, I found the so called "Indian community" not only very supportive but also often supplementing our Missions' resources. This was heartening - and yet another example of their generosity and spirit. Please convey to them my best wishes.
13. As you prioritise your resources to project India positively and bring her closer to partners and populations across the world, I call upon you to keep close to you the 'talisman' of Gandhiji – the simple test – of asking yourself at every step, how your endeavours will impact the humblest in India.
14. As I look back I am convinced that there is much to look forward to. I continue to have great expectations from you. With these words, I offer you my best wishes and safe travel back to your posts.