

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE FEDERAL COUNCIL OF SWITZERLAND**

Berne, September 13, 2019

1. I am delighted to visit the Swiss Confederation. I thank President Maurer for his warmth and special reception. Switzerland holds a very special place in our hearts. Our partnership is laced with a rare privilege. The first Treaty of Friendship that we signed as an independent Sovereign was with your country. Last year we celebrated 70 years of our friendship treaty and 70 years of our shared democratic journey championing liberalism, pluralism and enterprise.

2. We cherish our democracy and so do you. We successfully conducted our General elections recently. India's seven-phase, six-week long parliamentary elections, held in April-May this year, with an electorate of 900 million and over 600 million voter turnout, was the planet's largest democratic exercise so far. Nearly half of the 543 Members of Parliament in the Lok Sabha, our Lower House, have been elected for the first time. More importantly, we saw 78 women Members of Parliament joining the Lower House, the highest ever in the history of our democracy. Beyond numbers, our Parliament vividly captures the diversity of India. Your achievements on this score are equally impressive, and we have been privileged to share our experiences.

3. I bring with me the message of a New India in the making - an India that is combining its civilizational ethos and values with modern day progress and prosperity, an India that breathes and lives its age-old philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, that is the entire world is one family, even as it seeks to provide the best for its people.

4. My visit to Switzerland is taking place in the year which marks the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation. He had visited Villeneuve in 1931. I will be unveiling a bust of Mahatma Gandhi in Villeneuve tomorrow to celebrate his special connection with your country and your values. The great Indian monk Swami

Vivekananda and Nobel laureate Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore also visited Switzerland drawn by your intellect and natural beauty.

5. Your pursuit of knowledge and science has made your country an attractive education destination. We have a large number of Indian students enrolling in your universities. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to address your youth at the University of Berne. I was most impressed by their outlook and spirit. I am happy that we have agreed to renew the Hindi Chair at the University of Lausanne.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. India - Switzerland partnership has made significant progress. Our complementary strengths make us natural partners. India is the world's fastest growing major economy. We have set a target to become a 5 trillion economy by 2025. Our performance on world's leading business Indexes has been impressive. Around 65 percent of our population is below 35 years of age. Our youth has the drive, energy and confidence to script the machine-intelligence age and to draw the contours of the 4th Industrial Revolution. We are skilling and empowering them to convert our demographic profile into demographic dividend. We count on your cooperation to make them drivers of our growth and prosperity. The India-Switzerland Business Roundtable being held within the framework of my visit will contribute to intensifying our economic and technological engagement. We look forward to exchanging a Letter of Intent to create an India-Switzerland Science and Innovation Alliance to step-up our existing cooperation in these fields.

7. I am happy to note that we will have the first automatic exchange of information on tax matters in the coming weeks. It is a very positive development. Tax evasion and money laundering have strong links with terrorism. The scourge of terrorism is among the gravest challenges that the world faces today. India has been a victim of state sponsored terrorism for decades. We seek your support to enhance global efforts to defeat and destroy all manifestations of terrorism.

Ladies and gentlemen,

8. There is a need to strengthen our joint work in the multilateral arena. In order to be effective, international institutions need to reflect the realities of the contemporary world. I am pleased to note that India and Switzerland have made reciprocal arrangements for UN Security Council Non-Permanent seat candidatures. We are thankful to Switzerland for its consistent support for India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. We are committed to work with you to fight climate change. We are on course to meet our targets under the Paris Accord. We look forward to signing an MoU later in the day to enhance our bilateral partnership to tackle Climate Change. We also look forward to Switzerland joining the International Solar Alliance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. Our ties are based on close cultural understanding. Yoga and Ayurveda, Fribourg music and bollywood magic have brought our people together. Your beautiful landscapes, famous brand-names and sporting icons create very positive feelings for Switzerland in India. There is a strong case for you to be more active in India for strengthening business links and for forging stronger cultural connections. I once again thank President Maurer and members of the esteemed Federal Council for their warmth and friendship. I look forward to the official talks later today. We are ready to work together with new energy to herald a new era in our relations.

Thank you.