

ADDRESS BY H.E. Mrs. PRENEET KAUR, MINISTER OF STATE FOR
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OF INDIA AT THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF
THE AFRICAN UNION DURING ITS 18TH ORDINARY SESSION IN
ADDIS ABABA, 27 JANUARY 2011

Your Excellency, Prof. Eta Elizabeth Banda, Foreign Minister of the
Republic of Malawi and Chairperson of the Executive Council

Your Excellency, Mr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union
Commission

Your Excellency, Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, UN Secretary General and
Executive Secretary of the UNECA

Excellencies, Ministers of the Member States of the African Union

Distinguished delegates,

It gives me great pleasure to address the 18th Ordinary Session of the
Executive Council of the African Union. I thank you for your having
conferred on me this singular honour.

India's relations with Africa go back to the dawn of history. In more
contemporary times, the ties of friendship that bind us were forged in our
common struggle against colonial domination and apartheid. Today, in the
21st century, we have moved to a new paradigm - one in which seek to
cooperate with each other to build a better life for our future generations.

The new chapter that has been opened in the relationship between a
resurgent Africa and a rapidly growing India is anchored in the fundamental
principles of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit. While India and
Africa have come a long way, we both face daunting challenges of poverty,
hunger and disease. We have no doubt, however, that by working together,
India and Africa can set an example of fruitful cooperation in the developing
world.

India's partnership with Africa has been consultative, responsive and focused on capacity building and human resource development. We have over 20,000 scholarships through a variety of schemes now available for African students. These include the pan-African e-Network Project's tele-education component, the India Technical and Economic Cooperation programme and the larger training opportunities offered after our first India Africa Forum Summit in 2008. Special scholarships focusing on agriculture sciences and fellowships for science and technology have been introduced and are under implementation. We are confident that this paradigm of cooperation will continue so that we can contribute to the development of Africa's own capacities for its progress.

Our partnership is for socio-economic transformation and growth. In recent years, there has been a surge in Indian investment in Africa. The growth in trade between India and Africa has also been impressive. We welcome an increase in African exports to India. The Duty Free Tariff Preference Scheme announced by India for the Least Developed Countries should contribute towards this objective. Indian investment in Africa would also, we expect, play a role in this regard.

The development of infrastructure is a priority for Africa. We are happy to be contributing to this end through the concessional lines of credit extended by us. We stand ready to do more.

The development of continental level cooperation between India and Africa, with the first India Africa Forum Summit that was held in New Delhi in April 2008, marks an important milestone in our partnership. This new framework takes into account Africa's own aspirations for pan-African institutions and development programmes.

The first India Africa Forum Summit came up with a Framework of Cooperation that was, after a series of consultations, translated into a Plan of Action. I am happy to say that besides being fairly comprehensive, the Plan of Action is also very specific. It commits India, for example, to the establishment of an India Africa Institute of Foreign Trade, a Diamond Institute, an Institute of Education Planning and Administration, an Institute of Information and Technology, 10 Vocational Training Centres and 5 Human Settlement Institutes. The Plan of Action was adopted in March last

year and we have moved rapidly forward in its implementation. We hope to be able to show significant results in the first year itself.

Excellencies and Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the first India Africa Forum Summit, it was decided by our Leaders together that the second Summit would be held in Africa in 2011. As the second India Africa Forum Summit is to be held in Africa, we earnestly hope that decisions in this regard will be taken by this Summit of the African Union. We look forward to a second Summit that will, we expect, take forward our partnership and impart it with even more substance. We would be working with all of you in the months ahead to develop ideas that would make the Summit productive and useful and fulfil the aspirations of our peoples.

I would also like to take this opportunity to refer to our election to the UN Security Council for a 2-year term that began on the first of this month. We are fully conscious that our election by an overwhelming majority would not have been possible without the fullest support of our friends from Africa. We thank you for your support. While the AU is ably represented by three of its member states in the Security Council, I would like to assure you that India will always be among the first to join its voice with yours. The expectations from Africa will be foremost in our mind when we discharge our duties in the Council.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that for India, its partnership with Africa is one of its most important. It is a historical partnership tempered in the fire of common struggles, embedded in common aspirations and strengthened through common commitments. We are determined to work with Africa to impart even further content and dynamism to our mutual relationship always and every time for mutual benefit. We have every reason to feel confident that our joint endeavours will be truly successful.

I look forward to our further engagement this year when the second India Africa Forum Summit convenes.

I thank you for your attention.

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