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Statement

by

**His Excellency Mr. S. M. Krishna,
Minister of External Affairs of India**

at the

**General Debate of the 67th Session
of the United Nations General Assembly**

New York

1 October 2012

**Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am privileged to address the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Let me begin by congratulating you, Excellency, on your election to the distinguished office of President of the 67th session of the UN General Assembly. I would like to assure you of our constructive support to your work over the course of the coming year.

Mr. President,

We are assembled in New York at a time when we are faced with multiple global challenges that transcend national boundaries.

Developing countries are still to recover from the downturn in the global economy. Their quest for poverty eradication and sustainable development remains an uphill task. Food and energy security as well as health and education for their population remain daunting challenges.

The West Asia and North Africa region is seeing unprecedented socio-political upheaval. The question of Palestine remains unresolved.

And, threats emanating from terrorism, maritime piracy, drug trafficking and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continue to multiply.

These challenges demand that we act to work for solutions in a concerted and coordinated manner. This is the only path to success.

Mr. President,

At the RIO+20 Summit, the international community renewed its commitment to sustainable development, recognizing poverty eradication to be the greatest global challenge.

And to act on this score, it unequivocally reaffirmed the sanctity of the RIO principles.

India remains committed to addressing Climate Change through a comprehensive, equitable and balanced outcome based on the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities.

We are hosting the 11th Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Hyderabad in less than two weeks from now. We seek the support of Parties to fashion an outcome that harmonizes a strong biodiversity action with our basic development objectives.

Mr. President,

The process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals has begun.

The MDGs must be integrated in the new framework so that the unmet development priorities continue to be the main focus.

In the interim, with still three years to go for the MDG target date of 2015, it is imperative to ensure that all efforts towards the achievement of the MDGs are made.

In the global discourse on the post-2015 development agenda, the focus ought to be on the word 'development'. It ought to be firmly entrenched in the understandings and principles of Rio+20 and be anchored in the intergovernmental process in the UN.

Priority must be given to the challenges of poverty, employment, food and energy, water, health, environmental sustainability, unsustainable lifestyles and above all, economic growth.

Ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment is essential to the pursuit of building inclusive societies. It is also an imperative for building strong and resilient economies. We are happy to support the efforts of the United Nations.

We also need to pay particular attention to upgrading the skills of the youth and ensuring employment opportunities. Children and youth are our future. We need to invest in them to reap the demographic dividend to secure our future.

India remains firmly committed to scaling up our development partnership with Africa, including through the framework of the India-Africa Forum Summit.

Similarly, we will continue to build on our commitments for enhanced cooperation with the Least Developed Countries, the Landlocked Developing Countries, and the Small Island Developing States within the framework of South-South Cooperation.

Mr. President,

India is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society. Our civilizational ethos has been underpinned by peaceful coexistence and tolerance, values that Mahatma Gandhi placed at the core of India's national life. These principles are enshrined in our Constitution that provides the foundation for our secular, democratic and inclusive polity.

Mutual respect for deeply held religious sentiments is the bedrock of tolerance and coexistence. Unfortunate recent events have highlighted the need for enhanced dialogue among faiths and civilizations. Violence cannot lead to greater understanding. It is necessary to uphold norms of peaceful international discourse. In particular, the safety and security of diplomatic personnel should be fully respected.

Mr. President,

Terrorism remains one of the most potent threats to international peace and

security.

The international community must adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach towards terrorism and focus on efforts to dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism including its invidious network of epicenters, training facilities and financing.

It is high time we demonstrated the necessary political will and agreed on a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism to strengthen the normative framework against the increasingly sophisticated and globalized terrorist challenge.

India continues to be gravely concerned by the menace of piracy and armed robbery at sea. Apart from major economic and commercial consequences of this scourge, it has serious humanitarian implications for the large number of seafarers held hostage by the pirates.

The need of the hour is once again concerted international action, under the UN auspices, with special attention being paid to address the welfare of seafarers and their families.

Mr. President,

Peacekeeping and disarmament are among the most unique pursuits of the UN because they embody the promise and innate potential of the organization to make the world a better place.

India has a proud history of participation in UN peacekeeping operations dating back to the 1950s, having taken part in as many as 43 peacekeeping operations.

The challenge before the international community today is to ensure that UN peacekeeping is adequately resourced and enabled to meet the realities of today, including in post-conflict and peacebuilding contexts. In this regard, we are hopeful that progress will be made in all outstanding issues between Sudan and South Sudan.

India is committed to achieving a nuclear weapons-free world. The principles of the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan of 1988 for achieving nuclear disarmament in a time-bound, universal, non-discriminatory, phased and verifiable manner remain relevant even after more than two decades.

There is need to forge a renewed consensus on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. There is also need for meaningful dialogue among all states possessing nuclear weapons to build trust and confidence and for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines.

Measures must be taken to reduce nuclear risks, including the grave risks posed by terrorists gaining access to weapons of mass destruction, thus strengthening nuclear security.

The Conference on Disarmament – the international community's sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, deserves our support in discharging its mandate of

negotiating treaties on issues on the international disarmament agenda.

Mr. President,

The crisis in Syria continues unabated and is a matter of serious concern for us. Any further militarization of the crisis can have catastrophic consequences for the region.

We urge all parties to commit themselves to resolving the crisis without any further bloodshed through an inclusive, Syrian-led political process that can meet the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. We support the efforts of the UN and urge all sides to cooperate with the Joint Special Representative, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, in good faith.

Support for the Palestinian cause has been a cornerstone of India's foreign policy. We were privileged to receive President Mahmoud Abbas in India earlier this month. We support their aspirations for enhanced status at the United Nations.

It is imperative that there be an early realization of a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace initiative, Quartet Road map and relevant UN resolutions.

Mr. President,

India desires constructive and friendly relations with all its neighbours. We have a vision of a peaceful, stable and prosperous region with enhanced cooperation and connectivity linking us with Central Asia, the Gulf and South-East Asia.

Within South Asia, we have sought to enhance bilateral relations individually with each of our neighbours and through the aegis of the SAARC.

We have embarked on a resumed dialogue process with Pakistan and advocate a step-by-step approach to normalizing our bilateral relations.

An unwarranted reference has been made to Jammu and Kashmir from this podium. Our principled position on the issue has been consistent and is well known. The people of Jammu and Kashmir have chosen and reaffirmed their destiny repeatedly through India's well established democratic processes. We wish to make it abundantly clear that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India.

India supports the Government and people of Afghanistan in their endeavour to build a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous country. We are ready to partner with the Afghan people as they rebuild their country in accordance with their own priorities and national circumstances.

The continuing existence of safe havens and sanctuaries for terrorists beyond Afghanistan's borders is the major impediment to the restoration of peace and security in Afghanistan.

India is committed to creating an enabling environment where the Afghan people

can live in peace and security and decide their future themselves, without outside interference, coercion and intimidation.

Mr. President,

The United Nations and the norms of international relations that it has fostered remain the most efficacious means for converting today's challenges into opportunities.

We need to, however, ensure that the architecture of global governance reflects contemporary realities. Sticking to structures designed at the end of the Second World War only constrains multilateralism from delivering on its promises.

The most important and decisive step towards remedying this situation pertains to the UN Security Council, which must be expanded in both permanent and non-permanent categories.

The reformed Council must include countries that are capable and willing to bear additional burdens relating to the maintenance of international peace and security and be able to sustain global campaigns against new and emerging global threats.

Let me also stress that we must address, sooner rather than later, the incongruity of the lack of permanent membership from Africa.

Equally, India will promote and lend her weight for enhancing the voice and participation of developing countries in decision making in global economic and financial institutions.

The IMF's quota reform process must be accelerated with altered quotas reflecting contemporary economic weight.

Mr. President,

Speaking in this Assembly, on 14 October 1968, Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, said, "The United Nations is the trustee of the world's peace and represents the hopes of mankind. Its very existence gives a feeling of assurance that the justice of true causes can be brought fearlessly before the world. This Assembly and the agencies of the United Nations should, in all that they do sustain those hopes and promote the causes of peace."

These words remain true to this day.

Let me conclude by assuring you Mr. President and the members of the General Assembly that India will continue to abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and strive to strengthen the United Nations.

I thank you.
