

Remarks by External Affairs Minister at the 12th ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers Meeting in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar (August 9, 2014)

August 09, 2014

Excellencies,

1. I have listened carefully to the priorities that you have all pointed to in the future direction of ASEAN India cooperation. We have the instruments for taking action in terms of the 26 dialogue mechanisms, including Ministerial meetings in seven areas.
2. I would like to suggest that our dialogue on science and technology cooperation should elevate to SOM level in 2014 and Ministerial level in 2015. In view of the project on the Tracking and Data Reception Station and Data Processing Facility at Ho Chi Minh City and the upgradation of BIAK II in Indonesia, we should also ask our space agencies to institute an annual SOM and Ministerial Meeting on space collaboration. The SME dialogue at JWG level should graduate to SOM level so that it can adopt a more ambitious pace and agenda. We need to make special effort to bring annual regularity to our sectoral meetings, especially the meetings in renewable energy and environment, which started in 2012.
3. Excellencies, we hope to open our new Mission to the ASEAN before our Summit in November 2014 and we are exploring the possibility of seconding one Officer to the ASEAN Secretariat.
4. To my mind, connectivity and trade and investment can bring about a seamless integration of our economic space and enable us to optimize our human and resource potential. I hope that our Economic and Trade Ministers will be able to sign the FTA on Services and Investment when they meet later this month and also agree on the modalities for setting up a dedicated ASEAN India Trade and Investment Centre
5. We have suggested that India, Myanmar and Thailand begin negotiations on a Transit Transport Agreement at the earliest so that this can be concluded by the time the Trilateral Highway completes in 2016.
6. The ACCC-India meeting and Working Groups suggested by it should inform the AISOM on how ASEAN and India can identify the SEZs or economic nodes along their connectivity corridors of road, rail and sea and adopt a multi-modal approach to bring in Industry as a participant player. The Task Force on Maritime Connectivity and the IMT Transit Transport Agreement Task Force will be important to this.
7. Our civil aviation experts should find ways to complete the unutilized 18 sectors connecting Tier II and Tier III cities in India to tourist and business destinations in ASEAN. This will be practical and will assist our search for innovative financial solutions. We need to encourage a symbiotic relationship between the infrastructure of roads/railways/shipping lines, which the ASEAN want India to help create, and regular

economic activity with India to sustain such "connectivity". I look forward to your suggestions on how we, as Governments, can fast-track this process.

8. The AIWG anchored by our Mission to the ASEAN, AIJCC at DG and PR level and the AISOM at the level of our Permanent Secretaries can help in monitoring these and also oversee the utilization of the ASEAN India Cooperation Fund, ASEAN India Science & Technology Development Fund and the Green Fund.
9. I request you all, Excellencies, to block your calendars for March 11-12, 2015 for Delhi Dialogue VII. This time round, I hope you will join me in a panel discussion at the Inaugural Session of DDVII. We will be welcoming ISIS, Malaysia (Institute of Strategic and International Studies) and ASEAN-India Centre as Partners to Delhi Dialogue VII, while CII, ASSOCHAM, Indian Chambers of Commerce Kolkatta, All India Association of Industries Mumbai and ECRIER will come in as Associates. Each of the Partners and Associates will be organizing specific events in the run up to DDVII.
10. I will be visiting Viet Nam to continue my discussions with Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh and to inaugurate with him the 3rd Roundtable of the ASEAN India Network of Think Tanks on August 25, 2014. >
11. Looking ahead at the next Plan of Action for 2016-2021, we would wish to see greater focus on areas such as education and vocational skills training, which would impact the youth, and sectors of healthcare, pharmaceuticals and medical training, which impact the elderly in our countries.
12. Excellencies, in fulfillment of the ASEAN desire to see India play a greater role in support of the ASEAN Political Security Blueprint for 2015, we have attempted to provide balance and ballast to the Security Framework currently under discussion in EAS related workshops. We have contributed a paper to these discussions and we would be ready to explore possible principles for inter-state relations in East Asia.
13. The work plan under preparation by the SOMTC+India meeting will allow concerted action against international terrorism, transnational crime, combatting drug trafficking and ensuring cyber security. The ASEAN-India Centre will be organizing a workshop for brainstorming cyber security issues early next year.
14. India has concurred with the proposal from Lao PDR to co-chair the ARF Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy, the ARF Defence Officials Dialogue and the ARF Security Policy Conference meetings during Lao PDR's Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2016.
15. . We would like to further strengthen our people-to-people programmes with ASEAN. I suggest extension of the Media Exchange Programme for another three years. The course for ASEAN Diplomats and Officials from the ASEAN Secretariat at the Foreign Service Institute in New Delhi will continue. I understand our Agriculture Ministers will be discussing the extension of the farmers exchange programme when they meet in October this year. We are adding new dimensions to the programmes for 250 ASEAN students when they visit India in September and December 2014. I have asked our Missions to establish Alumni associations for these students as also those who avail of scholarships under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme (ITEC) and the Mekong Ganga Cooperation. We will also be requesting

ASEAN concurrence for scholarships to be given from the ASEAN India Cooperation Fund to students from CLMV countries to be part of the first group of students to be enrolled in the Schools of Historical Studies and Ecology and Environment Studies at Nalanda University, which will begin functioning this year.

16. We look forward to receiving a positive response from CLMV countries on the recognition of the BSc Hons degree on Nursing from the six AIIMS in India, so that we can begin offering scholarships to CLMV students.
17. We are awaiting a proposal from Cambodia for a second EDC, CELT and also a Vocational Training Centre (VTC) in Takeo. We are also awaiting a proposal from Lao PDR to set up a CELT and VTC in one location at Savannakhet. In Viet Nam, we are deputing an English language teacher to the existing CELT in Da Nang and a proposal is awaited for establishing a new CELT in the Naval Academy at Nha Trang. IT Centres are to be set up in the CLMV countries by CDAC and India's Department of Electronics and Information Technology is working on this. It gave us great satisfaction to hand over the Language Laboratory and Conference facilities in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw to the Government of Myanmar in April 2014. We are examining a proposal from the ASEAN for conducting an intensive English language training programme for law enforcement officers from CLMV at the existing CELTs in their respective countries. We await concurrence through ASEC for the proposal from our Ministry of Finance for conducting a training programme at the National Institute for Securities Markets (NISM), Mumbai for 32 professionals dealing with capital markets in CLMV countries.
18. We are reactivating our aseanindia.com website, which is currently being re-vamped to strengthen the dialogue between ASEAN and Indian people as one community. This will allow our citizens to discuss the achievements and relevance of the ASEAN India strategic partnership through an interlinked mechanism of a website and seven social media platforms. Our respective officials should work together to utilize the dynamism in this public dialogue.
19. We must ensure that the tragedy of the crash of MH17 on July 17 is never repeated. It is imperative that safety of civil aviation be ensured and parties in conflict situations urgently abjure violence and work for diplomatic solutions. We support a broad-based international investigation be launched quickly to cover all aspects of this incident.
20. We hope to see progress with respect to implementation of Guidelines to the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and the adoption of a Code of Conduct on the basis of consensus. We have been consistent in our opposition to the use or threat of use of force. We support freedom of navigation and access to resources in accordance with principles of international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

21. In view of the 70th Anniversary Summit of the United Nations in 2015, I would urge also that ASEAN and India come together in the EAS to urge support for early reform of the United Nations and expansion of the Security Council to reflect contemporary geo-political realities.
22. Excellencies, ASEAN-India relations now have reached critical mass. We can together push the bar higher.
23. For the future consistency of our engagement, it is important that as ASEAN integrates and works towards an ASEAN Community by 2015, ASEAN-India integration keeps pace. This is particularly necessary for people-to-people connectivity for tourism and business. We need to enhance visa facilitation for business purposes, including grant of long-term (5-10 years) multiple entry business visas and stay permits for professionals and their families. This needs to be given urgent priority on the agenda ahead.
24. Excellencies, our history and present collaboration has bearing on the future outlook for the region and also globally as we seek to address an expanding canvas of challenges. ASEAN and India can together bring strength of global solutions on food and energy security, disaster management and sustained development.
25. The USP of the ASEAN India strategic partnership is our common vision for the future development of our people. We are approaching 2015 as a landmark year for the ASEAN and 2017 would be the 25th anniversary of the ASEAN India strategic partnership. In this context, India looks forward to working with you all to anchor our common vision even more firmly in our region.

Thank you.