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‘हर काम देश के नाम’

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India-Africa Defence Dialogue held on the sidelines of DefExpo 2022 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat; paves way for strengthening of India-Africa defence relations

Gandhinagar Declaration adopted to enhance cooperation in the fields of training & military exercises

Raksha Mantri invites African nations to explore Indian defence equipment & technologies; says, robust Indian defence manufacturing ecosystem can fulfil international requirements

“India & Africa are important stakeholders in ensuring a safe & secure maritime environment, especially in Indian Ocean Region”

India does not believe in a hierarchical world order; Our international relations are guided by human equality & dignity: Shri Rajnath Singh

“UN Security Council needs to be more representative for a sustaining global order wherein international peace, security & order are respected universally”

The India-Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD) was held on the sidelines of DefExpo 2022 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat on October 18, 2022. The dialogue successfully brought out various aspects of the IADD’s theme ‘Adopting Strategy for Synergizing and Strengthening Defence and Security Cooperation’. Delivering the keynote address, Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh defined the theme of IADD as the underlying commitment of India and African countries to explore new areas of convergence for defence engagements, including capacity building, training, cyber security, maritime security and counter terrorism. He termed India & African countries as important stakeholders in ensuring a safe and secure maritime environment, especially in the Indian Ocean Region. He pointed out that the two sides work together in many regional mechanisms, which foster inclusive and constructive

collaboration in dealing with shared security concerns and address common challenges to peace and prosperity.

Emphasising that India & Africa share a multi-faceted defence and security cooperation relationship, Shri Rajnath Singh reiterated India's support to Africa to deal with challenges of conflict, terrorism and violent extremism. "India remains united with African countries in their quest for peace, security, stability, growth and prosperity. Our partnership with Africa is centered on the ten guiding principles articulated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi during his address to Parliament of Uganda in 2018. He had clearly stated that Africa will be at the top of our priorities. We will continue to intensify and deepen our engagements with Africa. Apart from the goals of developmental, commercial and technological partnerships that India wants to forge with African nations, the statement also covered cooperation in strengthening capabilities in combating terrorism and extremism, supporting UN peacekeeping missions and work for open and free oceans," he said.

The Raksha Mantri described the Indo-African ties as multi-faceted covering economic, diplomatic and defence domains. He highlighted that India and Africa share a robust partnership, which is based on the cooperative framework of 'SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region), drawn upon the ancient ethos of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (The World is One Family).

Shri Rajnath Singh invited African countries to explore Indian defence equipment and technologies, stating that India has emerged as a leading defence exporter in recent years. "Peace, security and development are inter-related. Security is essential for enabling development in the region. We have created a robust public and private defence industry. A defence manufacturing ecosystem has been created in India which has the advantage of abundant technical manpower. Our defence industry can work with you to fulfil your defence requirements," he told his African counterparts.

The Raksha Mantri was of the view that India does not believe in a hierarchical world order where few countries are considered superior to others. He stated that India's international relations are guided by the essence of human equality and dignity, which is a part of its ancient ethos. "We do not believe in making or becoming a client or satellite state, and so, when we partner any nation, it is on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect. Forging relations comes naturally to India, as we work towards mutual economic development," he said.

Shri Rajnath Singh also reaffirmed India's belief that the global world order deserves to be democratised further. Stating that the world's multilateral forums should be reflective of the change in global realities, he stressed on the need to make the UN Security Council more representative which will provide it with greater legitimacy, thereby sustaining a global order wherein the principles of international peace, security and order are respected universally.

The Raksha Mantri threw light on India's support to Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic. He lauded the Indian Navy for exhibiting excellent capability and service through the Mission SAGAR initiatives, which helped provide timely supply of emergency medical supplies, besides deploying medical expert teams for training and assistance. "India has been the first responder in providing Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief to several African countries," he added.

Shri Rajnath Singh also elaborated on the history of political, economic and cultural linkages between India and Africa, saying that the feeling of solidarity, mutual trust and confidence born in the days of colonialism continues to drive the cooperation. He added that India has been one of the strongest advocates of African decolonisation and has worked for the end of racist and apartheid regimes of the past.

Later, the Gandhinagar Declaration was adopted as an outcome document of IADD 2022. It proposes to enhance cooperation in the field of training in all areas of mutual interest by increasing training slots and deputation of training teams, empowerment and capability building of the defence forces of Africa, participation in exercises and humanitarian assistance during natural disasters. India offered fellowship for experts from African countries through Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis.

Fifty African countries, including 20 Defence Ministers, seven CDS/Service Chiefs and eight Permanent Secretaries participated in the Dialogue attesting to the high priority accorded to India-Africa engagement in defence and security. On the sidelines of the IADD, Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh and Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Ajay Bhatt met with the visiting African Ministers where issues related to defence and bilateral relations were discussed.

The IADD, as a part of DefExpo 2022, showcased to the African nations the growing prowess of the domestic defence industry, which is one of the major drivers of the nation's resolve to achieve 'Make in India, Make for the World' as envisioned by the Prime Minister. This interaction is expected to help fulfilling the Defence requirements of our African partners as also achieving the objective of catering to our domestic requirements. A Special Cover on IADD and a book on 'India-Africa Defence Cooperation: Opportunities and Challenges' were released during the event.

The IADD was institutionalised to be held biennially during successive DefExpos. It seeks to build on the existing defence partnerships between African countries & India and to explore new areas of convergence for mutual engagements including areas such as capacity building, training, cyber security, maritime security and counter-terrorism.

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