

**Address by External Affairs Minister at the 46th session of Council of Foreign Ministers of the  
Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**

March 01, 2019

**Your Highness,  
Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan,  
newly elected Chair and Foreign Minister of UAE,**

**Your Excellency Dr AK Abdul Momen, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh**

**Your Excellency Dr Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen,  
Secretary General, OIC, Foreign Ministers**

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am honoured to join my colleagues from nations, that represent a great religion and ancient civilisations. I stand here as a representative of a land, that has been for ages a fountain of knowledge, a beacon of peace, a source of faiths and traditions, and home to religions from the world – and now, one of the major economies of the world.

I carry the greetings of my Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modiji and 1.3 billion Indians, including more than 185 million Muslim brothers and sisters. Our Muslims brothers and sisters are a microcosm of the diversity of India. They speak Tamil and Telugu, Malayalam and Marathi, Bangla and Bhojpuri or any of the numerous languages of India.

They have diverse culinary tastes, myriad choices of traditional attire, and they maintain strong cultural and linguistic heritage of the regions they loved and have lived for generations. They practice their respective beliefs and live in harmony with each other and with their non-Muslim brethren.

It is this appreciation of diversity and co-existence, that has ensured that very few Muslims in India have fallen prey to the poisonous propaganda of radical and extremist ideologies.

**Your Highness and Excellencies,**

2019 is indeed a very special year. In this year

(i) The OIC is celebrating its Golden Jubilee.

(ii) The United Arab Emirates is celebrating Year of Tolerance, and

(iii) India is celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, a global symbol of Truth and Non-violence. It is therefore a matter of pride for me, and for India, to be invited in this special year, to be your Guest of Honour, and to be extended a hand of friendship.

I convey my deep appreciation to Foreign Minister His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed for his sagacious leadership and for his invitation. Thank you your Highness.

**Your Highness and Excellencies,**

In the past four years, few relationships have seen as much engagement as India's relationship with UAE and indeed, with the entire Gulf and West Asia Region. It is a return of history.

UAE has shown, how a nation can power its progress,

(i) with a grand vision,

(ii) with the openness of the world,

(iii) with an embrace of technology,

(iii) with investment in human resources and

(iv) with an environment, that nurtures talent and cultures from around the world.

We also express our special gratitude to Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh and others friends, for their strong support for, hearing India's voice in this forum.

**Your Highness and Excellencies,**

The OIC members constitute more than one fourth of the members of the United Nations, and nearly a quarter of the humanity. It is an organisation, that has a key role in shaping our world.

It brings together nations, on the foundation of a common faith, but also by a shared desire for a better future for their people.

(i) From Southeast Asia to the shores of Latin America;

(ii) from the steppes of Central Asia to the vast expanse of the African continent;

(iii) from South Asia to the great arc of West Asia and North Africa, the nations represented here, also reflect a magnificent diversity of language and literature, customs and culture, history and heritage.

**Your Highness, Excellencies,**

India shares much with you. Many of us have experienced the dark days of colonialism. Many of us saw, the light of freedom and the bright ray of hope at the same time.

We have stood together in solidarity, in our quest for justice, dignity and equality of all people, regardless of race and religion.

We have worked together, to fashion global institutions, into representative platforms, defined not by the interest of a few, but the voice of all sections of humanity.

We have together struggled for a world, where access to resources, markets and opportunities is fair and balanced. And, with so many nations here, India has forged deep bonds of friendship and close partnerships.

As India's economy has grown and become more integrated with the world, these partnerships have become stronger. We have excellent political ties, marked by warmth, respect and goodwill. With many, we have expanding defence and security cooperation.

Our economic engagement is robust and growing rapidly. Our digital partnerships are shaping the course of our future. And, our ties have the warm glow of deepening human and cultural links.

Nations to our east, Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia, are important pillars of India's Act East Policy, and of our broader engagement in the Indo Pacific Region.

In our neighbourhood, with Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Maldives we have ties, forged in

(i) our shared struggles and sacrifices,

(ii) in the immeasurable warmth of our hearts, and (iii) in our unwavering commitment to the security and prosperity of our people and region.

In Central Asia, where human aspirations linked us across the mightiest mountains since ancient times, we are rebuilding our relationship along new routes of possibilities.

We do this, especially with and through Iran, a country, with which we not only share civilizational and cultural links, but a partnership, that is vital for stability and prosperity in our region.

In West Asia, our solidarity with the aspirations of the Palestinian people have remained unwavering.

Our international journey was often pursued in close partnership with Egypt. Iraq and India have stood together in our triumphs and trials. We have with great admiration supported Jordan's efforts in strengthening the voices of moderation and building bridges of understanding between faiths.

Further to the West, with nations like Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria we work for a shared desire for a more inclusive world.

With Turkey, a nation, with which, we have many strands of connected history, we are imparting new momentum to our ties. Our many friends from Africa are here.

It is a friendship of deep emotional bond that comes from shared struggle for freedom, and for a voice and a place in the world. Today, on the foundations of that extraordinary heritage, India and Africa have launched a new partnership of prosperity in the dynamic African continent.

Here in our neighbourhood of the Gulf Region, our relationships are as old as time. The tides of Arabian Seas have carried forth, our timeless links of trade, culture and religions.

Presently, the Gulf Region is our largest market, supplier of energy and source of remittances. More than 8 million Indians living in the region, are the 8 million vibrant threads of this partnership. But now our relationship is much more than that, thanks to the extraordinary effort and attention by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the leadership of the region.

It is an indispensable strategic and security partnership, and a natural economic partnership, of

immense value, to our nations, and for our shared region.

### **Your Highness and Excellencies,**

Today, we all live in a world of sweeping changes, and multiple challenges, that happen, but rarely in history. We see global shifts in power.

The centre of gravity of the global economy is moving to Asia. The international order we are familiar with, is changing. Freedom, opportunities, connectivity, health, education and prosperity are more widespread than ever before.

The time it takes nations to lift people out of poverty, is getting shorter. Digital revolution has created unprecedented opportunities to empower people and transform our economies.

We have affordable and accessible technologies that give us hope, for a sustainable energy future. Yet, we also live on the edge of uncertainty. Tensions, turbulence, disputes, violence, dislocation, displacement are also at a high. Conflicts, within and between societies are rising.

We are also seeing the human and economic costs of climate change. And, we are witnessing the terrible daily destruction, in senseless terrorist violence.

It is destroying lives, destabilising regions, and putting the world at great peril. The reach of terror is growing, its lethality is increasing and the toll it is taking, is rising.

In the rich diversity of Southeast Asia, In West Asia, and the Gulf, In North Africa, and Sahel region, In Europe, and North America, In Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and, India, We see the terrible face of terror;

### **Excellencies and your Highness**

Terrorism and extremism bear different names and labels. It uses diverse causes. But in each case, it is driven by distortion of religion, and a misguided belief in its power to succeed. The fight against terrorism is not a confrontation against any religion.

It cannot be. Just as Islam literally means peace, none of the 99 names of Allah mean violence. Similarly, every religion in the world stands for peace, compassion and brotherhood.

It is a verse in the Holy Koran which says **La Ikrah fiddeen**

- Let there be no compulsion in religion

And Sura Al Hujurat says

**"O Mankind! We created you from a single pair of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may know one another, not that you may despise one another."**

The founder Guru of Sikhism Guru Nanak dev, gave the similar message to the mankind and I quote,

**'awwal allah noor upaaya, kudarat ke sab bande ek noor te sab jag upjeya, kaun bhale kaun mande'**

This means:

**"First, Allah created light; then, by his creative power,**

**he made all mortal beings. From that one light, the entire world came into being,**

So, who is good, and who is bad?

**Your Highness and Excellencies,**

India has always embraced and found it easy to embrace pluralism since it is embedded in the oldest Sanskrit religious text "The Rig Veda" and I quote

**एकं सद्भिर्वा बहुधा वदन्ति,**

which means

**"God is One but learned men describe Him in many ways".**

Our great philosopher Swami Vivekananda, said that this phrase from the Rig Veda has "given the theme to all subsequent thoughts in India, and one, that will be the theme of the whole

world of religions”.

**Your Highness and Excellencies,**

This is not a clash of civilisations or cultures, but a contest of ideas and ideals. As Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has often said, it is a struggle between the values of humanism and the forces of inhumanity.

If we want to save the humanity then we must tell the states who provide shelter and funding to the terrorists, to dismantle the infrastructure of the terrorist camps and stop providing funding and shelter to the terror organisations, based in their country. At the same time I would like to say that this menace could not be fought, only through military, intelligence or diplomatic means.

It is also a battle, that must be won through the strengths of our values, and the real message of religions. This is a task that states, societies, sages, scholars, spiritual leaders, and families must pursue, through personal contacts and on social media. And, for this

- Faiths must speak to faiths.
- Cultures must engage cultures.
- Communities must build bridges, not erect walls.
- The youth must shape the future, not destroy lives.

I am particularly pleased to participate in a conference, whose theme is a road map for prosperity and development.

However, I may enter a caveat: the young are not going to be content, with only road maps. They want roads as well. They also want them to be built fast.

It must be our common objective to ensure, that we leave them a world, that is infinitely better in terms of equitable economic growth and social justice, than the one, we inherited. That is the mission, which has brought us together in Abu Dhabi, a city that has matured into a landmark of Asia and the world.

**Your Highness and Excellencies,**

India is the world's third largest economy on Purchasing Power Parity; and, is the fastest growing one. We are prepared to share our market, resources, opportunities, and skills with our partners.

We will do what we can within our capacity to ensure that the path to development remains open to all and the global trade regime is open, stable and fair.

**Your Highness and Excellencies,**

At 50, Organisation of Islamic States is making a new beginning. The choices you make, the direction you set, will have a profound impact on humanity.

The OIC has a huge responsibility and a great opportunity to lift humanity to a higher level of peace and prosperity, and to make this planet a better place, not just for your people, but for rest of the world.

And, we will work with you to

- (i) spread the true meaning and mission of all religions;
- (ii) promote respect for and between faiths;
- (iii) counter the language of hate with the message of harmony;
- (iv) advocate moderation over extremism and pluralism over exclusion;
- (v) inspire youth to the path of service, than of destruction;
- (vi) build bridge of understanding and reduce barriers across cultures and religions.

**Your Highness and Excellencies,**

The late President of India Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, popularly referred to as the People's President, said and I quote,

**"Where there is righteousness in the heart,  
there is beauty in the character.**

**When there is beauty in the character,  
there is harmony in the home.**

**When there is harmony in the home,  
there is order in the nation.**

**When there is order in the nation,  
there is peace in the world.”**

**Your Highness and Excellencies,**

I come from the land of Mahatma Gandhi, where every prayer ends with the call for Shanti or Peace for all. I convey our best wishes, our support and our solidarity in your quest for stability, peace, harmony, economic growth and prosperity for your people and the world.

**Thank you.**

**Shukran**

**Abu Dhabi**

**March 01, 2018**