

India- Africa Strategic Dialogue

IDSA, New Delhi

November 24-25, 2011

Concept Note

India and Africa have in past shared a close relationship that hinged on the common struggle against colonialism, apartheid, poverty, disease, illiteracy and hunger. The first India Africa forum summit held in New Delhi in 2008 marked the beginning of a robust and contemporary partnership. The second Africa India Forum Summit, held in Addis Ababa in May 2011, emphasised the renewed focus of India to strengthen and enhance its partnership with countries in the African continent. It brought out two important documents, the 'Addis Ababa Declaration' and the 'Africa-India Framework for Enhanced Co-operation'. Both agreements include guidelines for Indo-African relations in the coming years, and provide a framework for the establishment of a long-term and stable partnership of equality and for the mutual benefit of India and Africa. They also lay down a blueprint for India-Africa co-operation in strategic, political, economic, social, science and technology, cultural and other fields.

India and Africa have identified climate change, food, energy and the financial crisis as the common challenges that face the world today. Both India and Africa are committed to a balanced outcome of the climate change negotiations. Reform of the United Nations and the increased participation of developing countries in the decision making process are goals that both India and Africa identify with. Moreover in terms of international security both India and Africa are equally concerned with the dangers associated with the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Additionally, India has always highlighted the threat posed to international security by terrorism and organised crime. Both India and the African countries recognise the need to further strengthen international cooperation to combat global terrorism.

India has over the years been involved with UN peacekeeping operations, especially in the African continent. At the same time India has often stressed the urgent need to address the threat posed by piracy off the coast of Somalia in the Indian Ocean region at the United Nations and other multilateral forums. India is a founder-member of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) established in January 2009, and actively coordinates with navies in combating piracy in the Gulf of Aden. There is no doubt India and African states need to cooperate to combat and eradicate this menace.

Greater economic engagement has been seen as crucial to boosting ties between Africa and India. India's trade with Africa amounted to US\$ 46 billion in 2009-2010 and is expected to rise to US\$70 billion by 2015. Mutual efforts to deepen trade include

initiatives such as Focus Africa (covering 24 countries in Sub-Saharan, Southern and North Africa) and the Techno-Economic Approach for Africa-India Movement or Team 9 (facilitating concessional credit to eight West African countries). The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an economic development programme launched by the African Union (AU) to accelerate the economic growth of African countries and promote greater participation in the global economy, has attracted Indian investment. The success of the India-Africa project partnership conclaves since 2005 is evidence of the Indian industry's growing interest in investing in African countries. While a large proportion of Indian investment has been in the energy sector, significant investment has also been made in the infrastructure, engineering, chemicals, services, banking and finance, health, information technology and telecommunication sectors in Africa.

India is involved in peacekeeping operations under UN mandate in various parts of Africa as well as in training and capacity building among African military personnel. Another significant link with the continent is the Indian diaspora in various African countries. Greater integration of this community can significantly boost bilateral relations between African states and India.

Against this backdrop, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi is holding the first India-Africa Strategic Dialogue on November 24-25, 2011. The objective of the India-Africa Strategic Dialogue is to build on existing partnerships between African countries and India, and to explore new areas of convergence for mutual engagement.

The Dialogue will focus on India-Africa cooperation along the following themes:

I. Global issues

A gradual shift in the global power structures has become discernible over the past decade. This period has witnessed a relative decline of the United States and the rise of other powers such as China, India and Brazil. At the same time, Africa is moving towards a new direction. The continent has seen a surge in economic growth and democratic governance. This period of transition offers a number of possibilities wherein India and Africa can take a united stand on a number of important global issues for a peaceful world. India and Africa can show solidarity over issues like climate change, UN reforms and non-proliferation. Though these are the issues that have been highly politicised because of the pressure exerted by big and influential countries over the past several years, India and Africa can make a rational contribution to the debate.

- What is the position taken by India and Africa on the issue of UN reforms? Would the African countries support India's bid for a permanent seat in the Security Council?
- Is there a consensus between India and the African countries on the issue of climate change?

- What steps should be taken by India and Africa to enhance cooperation in non-traditional security matters such as climate change, renewable energy, food security etc?

II. Regional issues

There remain a number of regional issues between India and Africa which demands attention to take the relationship forward. Though there are no contentious issues between the two threatening the basic foundations of the relationship and challenging their national interests, efforts should be made to address mutual concerns. In this regard, the security issues of piracy, terrorism and other criminal activities, non traditional security issues and United Nations peace keeping in Africa are important issues to be discussed.

- What should be the role and approach of India and Africa on the issue of United Nations peace keeping in Africa?
- How can India and Africa act together to fight the menace of piracy in the waters connecting both the continents?

III. Bilateral issues

India and Africa share a number of common concerns between them. Both India and Africa agree that a strong cooperation between the two is necessary to take the relationship ahead. The areas in which cooperation is possible include among others political, trade and business, energy, defence, cultural etc. This dialogue would make an attempt to address the following questions:

- Keeping in mind that Africa is a huge heterogeneous continent, what should be India's approach for dealing with individual countries and with the region as a whole?
- Similarly, how should the African countries find unanimity in dealing with India?
- How different is Africa's economic engagement with India from its other bilateral engagements? How can India contribute to Africa's development and capacity building?
- Given the nature of common security threats emanating from terrorists, pirates and other criminal elements, what are the future prospects of an India-Africa defence and security cooperation?
- What is the role that the huge Indian diaspora in Africa can play for strengthening bilateral relations?