



## Ministry of External Affairs

Government of India

[Home](#) > [Media Center](#) > [Speeches & Statements](#)

# Address by Secretary (ER) to the Second India-Russia Heads of Think-Tanks Forum ICWA, Delhi (December 04, 2017)

December 04, 2017

1. I welcome the distinguished Members of the Indian and Russian delegations to the Second Meeting of the India-Russia Heads of Think-Tanks Forum.
2. I am happy to note that this high-level Russian delegation is here on the occasion of 70th Anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations. I am confident that this Forum will continue the task of critically reviewing our current engagement in order to chart a road-map that will strengthen the enduring bonds between our two countries.

### Distinguished delegates

3. Since our Independence in 1947 all Governments in India have accorded the highest priority to developing close relations with the people and Government of Russia. It is uncommon in history to find two major powers that have developed a partnership such as ours. As my Prime Minister says "India-Russia relations have been the one constant in a world that has changed dramatically since 1947". Our interactions have been characterized by warmth and goodwill but, more importantly, by a mutually rewarding collaboration through different stages of our national development and through the changing realities of the international situation. Our partnership has proved that it has the capacity to adapt. We have stood together in good and difficult times. Friendship, trust and co-operation are the foundations of our engagement. Russia is and will remain the key important foreign policy priority for India. It would not be out of place to state that this is a strong national consensus.
4. Our past relationship should not, however, transmute into a passive present partnership. There is no room for complacency in our ties. The past few years have witnessed unprecedented changes in the world. Our bilateral relationship cannot remain isolated from global changes or be immune from their impact. Therefore, the challenge before all of us, whether in Government or outside, would be how to nurture and foster our Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership amidst these fast unfolding global changes.

### Distinguished delegates,

5. The Strategic Partnership that we established at the beginning of the 21st century, and our shared desire to elevate this partnership to the level of a Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership are more than mere phrases. My Prime Minister said that they contain the blue-print for our future co-operation. The Annual Summits provide the anchor for our relationship, from which we get the

guidance to take ties forward. High-level meetings and consultations are needed to concretize the vision of our leaders. This is essential if we are to maintain our special relationship. It is encouraging that this year we witnessed a notable enhancement of such engagement at all levels. Both sides should make sincere efforts to maintain this momentum in the future.

6. A new and significant breakthrough this year was the first-ever meeting between my Prime Minister and the Governors of seventeen Russian Regions, during my Prime Minister's visit to St. Petersburg. It marks the beginning of efforts to prioritize co-operation between the States in India and the Regions of Russia. Our commitment to enhance this aspect of our engagement was underscored by the participation of my External Affairs Minister at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in September. Our visible presence, both at political and business levels, at such Forums in Russia is indicative of our willingness to participate more substantively in the Russian economy. We look forward to reciprocal endeavours on the Russian side in expanding our bilateral engagement beyond the traditional fields of Energy and Defence.
7. Our well-established co-operation in the Energy sector is now embarking in new directions. Investments in the Vankor and Taas-Yuryakh oilfields is symbolic of this. Our joint efforts to study the possibilities of building a pipeline from Russia to India as a commercial venture is another indication and, if we can realize this vision, it will benefit us both. Our cooperation in nuclear energy is a cornerstone of the Strategic Partnership. Domestic production of equipment and components will further enhance the commercial viability of our partnership in the nuclear power sector.
8. On the Defence side, we continue to co-operate and Russia remains a major supplier of our defence requirements. We appreciate Russia's consistent support through the seven decades of our partnership. At the same time, we believe that this is the opportune time to move from a buyer-seller format to joint production and joint investments under our Prime Minister's "Make In India" initiative, in order to bring a new dynamism to our military-technical co-operation. We invite Russian defence industry to look at our new policies in this regard and to partner us as India begins a journey to become a defence manufacturer.
9. Our military-to-military co-operation has grown this year with the first-ever tri-services exercise – "INDRA" - in Vladivostok in October. We appreciate the support that we received from the Russian Government for such an initiative. It is important, indeed imperative, that as Strategic Partners we further enhance the interaction between our Armed Forces in order that our respective security perspectives and military doctrines are well understood.
10. Beyond the Energy and Defence sectors, it is now time for both sides to explore how we can leverage commercial ties in other areas. Russia could look at new opportunities to invest in India, in the infrastructure and logistics sector for instance. All our economic indicators suggest that ours is a market with long term potential and stability. Dedicated channels for business engagement helmed by our respective Chambers of Commerce need to be built to inspire confidence and provide support for investors. Our trade figures also do not reflect the real potential in our relationship. Clearly, this is an area that requires a fresh infusion of ideas, and these could come from industry but also from scholars and experts such as yourselves.
11. Connectivity is one key to unlock this potential. The International North-South Transport Corridor is an exciting new area and we are ready to join Russia in operationalizing this idea. You would have noted that India has dispatched its first shipments of wheat to Afghanistan via Chabahar Port last month. This is the first step of our efforts to build a sea-land link with Central Asia and Russia

that is both secure and sustainable. We appreciate the encouragement given by Russia to the Chabahar Project. If we can successfully build connectivity and also engage with the Eurasian Economic Union to discuss ways of concluding free trade arrangements that are balanced and mutually beneficial, we unlock potential economic benefits not only for India and Russia but also for the benefit of our common friends in Eurasia.

12. One of the hallmarks of our friendship is our long track record of working together on regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest. I recall President Putin's words in his signed article in Times of India on 30 May 2017: "The Declaration of Strategic Partnership signed in 2000 provides for close coordination of approaches to ensuring international peace and security and resolving pressing global and regional issues." Our fruitful collaboration in the United Nations as well as in newer forums such as BRICS, the East Asia Summit, RIC and the G-20 are witness to this fact. We appreciate your strong support for our membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. We believe that our participation in SCO as a full Member, commencing with the presence of our External Affairs Minister at the just-concluded SCO Heads of Government meeting in Sochi last week, will contribute to peace, stability and prosperity of the whole region.
13. When speaking of connectivity, questions are asked whether India supports such regional and international initiatives. The answer is a categorical yes. It is important for such initiatives to be open, inclusive, transparent and financially sustainable. It is also essential that such initiatives are taken by all States with due sensitivity in respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, so that they are net contributors to regional stability and prosperity. We believe that Russia understands our position in this regard. As I have already said, we fully support Russia's connectivity initiatives.
14. In the new global situation, we need to re-define our special & privileged strategic partnership. While both of us pursue legitimate interests with other countries in the context of multi-polarity, these pursuits should factor into such policies the core concerns of the other. After all, our relationship is neither transactional nor based on convenience. We have a shared interest in peace, security and prosperity in Eurasia, in the Indo-Pacific and in the world at large. Whenever we have divergences, these should be bridged in an appropriate way through discussion and better understanding.
15. I would propose for your consideration, therefore, that in your deliberations at this and future conferences, experts of both sides could debate and reflect on the new realities of the 21st Century, and how we may jointly work to shape the emerging global architecture. We recognize well Russia's role in international affairs and we endorse and support your contribution to global stability. Russia has supported India's candidature in an expanded and reformed Security Council. We hope that Russia now works with us to make fundamental reforms to our global institutions. Like Russia, India has always believed that the UNO must remain at the heart of the multilateral system, but unless it is reformed it may no longer be able to fulfil its mandate effectively.
16. India and Russia are responsible space powers. In a significant development, India actively supported a Russian sponsored resolution on "Further Practical Measures on Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space". We also have an impeccable record on non-proliferation, and we have taken a conscious decision to strengthen the global non-proliferation regime. Our export controls are now concordant with the requirements of all multilateral export regimes. Russia's consistent support for India's efforts to seek membership is greatly valued. Membership of the NSG remains a priority for India. It is closely linked to our economic development and requirement for clean

energy. As our premier supplier in the area of nuclear power production, it is, therefore, our natural expectation to bank on Russia's active support for an early membership.

17. I take this opportunity to thank the ICWA and the Moscow State University for International Relations for arranging this dialogue. Your suggestions and advice is sought by both governments in finding innovative ways of sustaining and further building our Partnership in a challenging global landscape. The truth is that the India-Russia Partnership has been a permanent factor for stability; it has withstood the test of time, and it should be our common endeavour to keep it as an integral part of any emerging global framework in this century.

Thank you.



[Terms & Conditions](#)   [Privacy Policy](#)   [Copyright Policy](#)   [Hyperlinking Policy](#)   [Accessibility Statement](#)   [Help](#)

© Content Owned by Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

Visitors: 138569460 , Page last updated on: 4/12/2017

Working hours at Headquarters 9:00 A.M. To 5:30 P.M.