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India-Nigeria Joint Statement on the visit of Vice President to Nigeria

October 06, 2016

His Excellency Mr. M. Hamid Ansari, Honorable Vice President of India, visited Nigeria from 26 to 29 September 2016. Vice President Ansari was hosted by Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, SAN.

The Vice President of India was accompanied by H.E. Mr. Arjun Ram Meghwal, Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs, three Honorable Members of the Indian Parliament and a senior official delegation. A 22-member Indian high-level Business delegation led by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and supported by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India-ASSOCHAM-also accompanied the Vice President.

The President of Federal Republic of Nigeria, H.E. Mr. Muhammadu Buhari received the visiting Vice President at a courtesy call on Tuesday. The Vice President of India handed over an invitation from the President of India to President Buhari to pay a State Visit to India at a mutually convenient date. The President of Nigeria accepted the invitation in principle, and dates will be finalized through diplomatic channels.

Vice President Yemi Osinbajo held a closed-door meeting with the visiting Vice President, followed by bilateral Level talks. The two Vice Presidents, thereafter addressed jointly the India-Nigeria Joint Business Forum at Abuja hosted by the High Commission of India together with the apex chambers of commerce from India (CII and ASSOCHAM) and their counterparts from Nigeria. Vice President Osinbajo hosted an official dinner in honour of the visiting Vice President of India.

The bilateral talks between the two Vice Presidents recognized the existing strong and cordial relations between the two countries, and also acknowledged the shared perspectives and philosophies exemplified by their membership of the Non-Aligned Movement, NAM, South-South Cooperation and the Commonwealth. Both Vice Presidents recognized that Nigeria and India share a close relationship that pre-dates the independence of Nigeria and is rooted in shared global vision, mutual goodwill between their peoples, and also that both countries share the values of democracy, pluralism and inclusiveness.

The two Vice Presidents expressed satisfaction with the excellent state of bilateral relations covering wide spectrum including political, trade and commercial, defence, social and cultural ties. Both Vice Presidents reiterated that the Abuja Declaration for Strategic Partnership of 2007 continues to provide the framework for deepening the bilateral ties.

Expressing satisfaction at the ongoing defence cooperation between the two countries, the two leaders recognized that further cooperation in defence and counter-terrorism training is mutually beneficial. Both leaders also noted that the next meeting of the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee will be held later this year for reviewing the existing cooperation in the field of defence and security. The Vice President of India delivered an address at the National Defence College in Abuja.

The two Vice Presidents underlined the need to further deepen and expand bilateral cooperation particularly in the areas of energy, infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing and health. Both leaders also expressed the desire to strengthen and further develop cooperation in the field of renewable energy in particular solar energy and also space technology sector.

Both Vice Presidents expressed satisfaction that India is Nigeria's largest trading partner globally, and Nigeria is India's largest trading partner in Africa. They also acknowledged that there is untapped potential and strong complementarities that need to be harnessed for not only strengthening but also diversifying the bilateral trade.

The Vice President of India conveyed the important role of Nigeria in India's energy security. Both leaders agreed to strengthen the existing cooperation in oil and gas sector, and in particular to explore Government to Government agreements on oil and gas purchase from Nigeria.

While appreciating the recent initiatives by Nigeria to diversify its economy to non-oil sectors such as agriculture, solid minerals (mining), health and manufacturing, the Vice President of India offered India's active partnership for mutual benefit of both countries.

The Government of Nigeria conveyed appreciation for India's concessional loan of US\$100 million extended earlier for three power projects in Nigeria. Both sides would work to complete relevant process for early disbursement of the concessional loans.

Both Vice Presidents also expressed keenness to receive similar support in other sectors including agro-industry, healthcare, education, skills development and capacity building. The Vice President of India encouraged Nigeria to take advantage of the US \$ 10 billion concessional loan offered by India for African countries during the Third India-Africa Forum Summit in sectors of interest to it.

Both Vice Presidents noted that international terrorism is a scourge and a threat to the entire world and condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations including violent extremism. Both sides agreed to support the efforts of the international community to collectively fight this menace and to make concerted efforts for the early finalization and adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. They further agreed to intensify their cooperation with each other in this regard.

The Vice President of India reiterated India's continued support in technical cooperation and capacity building in sectors of interest to Nigeria, and in this connection announced an increase in training slots under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) from 200 to 300. In this regard, the Vice President of Nigeria acknowledged with appreciation the offer of military training to the Nigerian Armed Forces, in the spirit of the existing Defence Cooperation framework between the two countries.

The two Vice Presidents welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Bureau of Indian Standards and Standards Organisation of Nigeria. Representatives of both countries also signed a letter of Intent directing their officials to continue negotiations on the following Agreements/MOUs:

- (i) Renewable Energy;
- (ii) Transfer of Sentenced Persons;
- (iii) Customs cooperation; and
- (iv) Health cooperation.

Both sides agreed to explore the possibility of entering into a Visa Waiver Agreement for diplomatic passport Holders.

The Vice President of India appreciated the role played by the vibrant Indian community in Nigeria in strengthening bilateral relations, and conveyed his appreciation for the warmth, goodwill and support extended by the Government and people of Nigeria to the Indian diaspora. The Government of Nigeria warmly acknowledged their contribution to the economic development of Nigeria. Both leaders also committed to promoting and facilitating a more vibrant people-to-people contacts between both nations.

Both leaders underlined the need for regular interaction of leaders and senior officials of both countries, and recognized the need to hold the next Joint Commission Meeting at a mutually convenient date in early 2017.

The Vice President of India who has departed Nigeria today September 29, 2016, conveyed his deep appreciation for the warm hospitality extended to him and to his delegation and thanked the Government of Nigeria for the excellent arrangements made for his visit to Nigeria.



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