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India's partnership with Africa is free of conditionalities

BY DIPANJAN ROY CHAUDHURY, ET BUREAU | MAY 29, 2019, 11.19 PM IST

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NEW DELHI: India on Friday in a subtle message for China asserted that its partnership with Africa is free of conditionalities and totally demand driven.

"India's partnership with Africa is based on a model of cooperation which is responsive to the needs of African countries. It is demand-driven and free of conditionalities. It is based on our history of friendship, historical ties, and a sense of deep solidarity. As Prime Minister has underlined, African priorities are our priorities," pointed out T S Tirumurti, Secretary (Economic Relations) MEA in his speech on the occasion of [Africa Day](#) at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses. He is charge of India's ties with Africa.

"There has been unprecedented intensification of our political engagement with Africa with 29 visits to African countries at the level of President, Vice President and Prime Minister apart from several Ministerial visits. The visits have been in both directions. Subsequent to the visit of 41 Heads of State/Heads of Government who attended IAFS-III, we have hosted over 35 leaders from Africa for various events in the last nearly five years. India has already opened 6 of the 18 additional Missions in Africa," Tirumurti recalled.

"Our engagement is not limited only to the bilateral political level. Today, India and Africa have comprehensive diplomatic mechanisms at all three levels - continental, regional and bilateral and through multilateral fora. In addition to Summits (IAFS I, II, III), we have had three meetings with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of Africa. We are looking at ways to enhance cooperation," he noted.

India-Africa trade has multiplied and diversified in the last 15 years. India is ranked as the third largest export destination in Africa. India sources nearly 18% of its crude oil and also its LNG requirement, mostly from the West African region.

"Our bilateral trade stood at US \$ 62.16 billion for 2017-18 which reflects an increase of 21.56 % over the previous year."

"With the African continent, our investments are steadily growing in a range of sectors and India has become the fifth largest investor in Africa with cumulative investments at over USD 54 billion. Sizeable investments have been made in Oil and Gas, mining, banking, pharma, textiles and other sectors in African countries. Several Indian companies have entered into Joint ventures in Africa. They have the experience, technology and capital to unlock these African resources and create value for host governments. Many important firms from Africa also have established their presence in India," Tirumurti noted referring to Indo-African economic partnership

"The Duty Free Tariff Preference Scheme announced by India for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) benefitted African nations and has contributed towards steady increase in our trade figures by extending duty-free access to 98.2 % of India's total tariff lines. 38 African countries enjoy the benefits of our DFTP Scheme."

African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), which is expected to boost intra-African trade by elimination of import duties and non-tariff barriers providing opportunities for expansion of trade ties, will make Africa the largest free trade area in the world. India views this development as yet another opportunity to boost trade and economic ties with Africa, he told audience comprising African envoys to India.

"Africa is a continent which receives nearly 20% of our pharmaceuticals. We hosted the first India-Africa Health Sciences Meet in 2015. Many of our Pharma companies have established units in various parts of Africa, including Ethiopia, Uganda, DRC, [Zambia](#) and Ghana. Our medicines and medical equipment such as Bhabhatrons and phototherapy machines are saving lives in Africa. Many of our hospitals have entered into joint ventures for establishing health care facilities."

In pursuance of trilateral cooperation with Africa, India is collaborating with Japan and Kenya to build a cancer hospital, and is collaborating with UAE and is in discussion with Ethiopia to set up a Centre for IT Excellence. Trilateral partnership has considerable potential. "This is also in line with the nascent Asia-Africa Growth Corridor and we hope to further this area of cooperation," according to the senior diplomat.



During the Third India-Africa Forum Summit, India offered USD 10 billion for development projects over the next five years.

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India is also helping the African countries to bridge the digital divide. "We have launched 2nd phase of the Pan Africa e-Network project – e-VidhyaBharati and e-ArogyaBharati Network Project (E-VBAB), which aims to provide 5 years free tele-education to 4000 students, free medical education to 1000 doctors/nurses/paramedics and free medical consultancy."

"Every year, thousands of bright minds from African Continent come on self-financing basis to our Universities and colleges. These young people show the world that Africa has the drive to forge a new future."

As many as 13 current or former Presidents, Prime Ministers and Vice Presidents in Africa have attended educational or training institutions in India. The list includes current President of Nigeria, President of Mozambique and Vice President of Tanzania. Six current or former chiefs of armed forces in Africa trained in India's military institutions.

Referring to Indias Line of Credit for Africa, Tirumurti said, "Our development cooperation is a key feature of our engagement with the continent. After South Asia, the African continent is the largest recipient of [Indian overseas](#) assistance. 181 Lines of Credit have been extended to 41 countries for a total amount of USD 11 billion, which is 42% of the total amount under LoCs. We are working together with EXIM Bank to streamline our development assistance delivery to our African partners, especially after the adoption of 2015 IDEAS guidelines."

During the last 4 years, 6 IT Centres were established in [South Africa](#), Egypt, Morocco, Lesotho, Ghana, Namibia and Tanzania; a CGARD Technology Centre in Madagascar; 7 Vocational Training Centres in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Zimbabwe, and Egypt. A Technology Centre was also established in Zimbabwe. Entrepreneurship Centres are being set up in some countries. Several similar projects are at various stages of execution.

During the Third India-Africa Forum Summit, India offered USD 10 billion for development projects over the next five years. "We also offered grant assistance of USD 600 million. You will be happy to know that we are well on course to achieve those targets. I hope to have a mid-term review with my African Union counterparts next month. Under our grant in aid programs, we provided food grains, vehicles, IT equipments, books and miscellaneous items to several countries in Africa."

The senior diplomat also referred to India's cooperation with Africa in the areas of defence and security has only strengthened over the years to reflect new threats and transnational crimes. "Maritime security links have been strengthened. We have just recently given two Naval vessels to Mozambique. Terrorism now comes in various shapes and we are determined to fight it together. We are one of the largest contributors to UN Peace Keeping Missions in Africa which have played an important role in bringing peace and stability to the African continent."

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