MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON HIS STATE VISIT TO BOLIVIA

Santa Cruz, March 29, 2019

1. At the outset, let me thank President Evo Morales and the people of Bolivia for conferring me the highest State Honour of Bolivia, Condor de Los Andes en el Grado de Gran Collar. This is indeed a manifestation of the warmth and friendship that Bolivia has for my country and my people. I accept this Honour with humility and immense pride in our friendship. Through this special gesture, you have demonstrated your abiding love and affection   for India.

2. I also wish to express my profound gratitude to Brother Evo Morales for the gracious welcome extended to me and my delegation. We are overwhelmed by the beauty, richness and vibrancy of your country.

3. This is the first ever State Visit between India and Bolivia, and I feel honoured to be part of this historic moment in our diplomatic ties.

4. Our bilateral relations have been warm and friendly underpinned by abundant goodwill and affinity for each other. There is much that we share in common, from deep respect for Mother Earth to taking pride in our traditional culture and knowledge. Our cultures are anchored in peace, compassion and harmony. Unity in diversity is a common attribute of our societies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. President Evo Morales and I had extensive talks today. We discussed a range of areas of mutual interest in bilateral, regional and multilateral fields. We have reaffirmed our commitment to strengthen our political and economic engagement. We expressed happiness at growing trade ties and our keen desire to step up investment and technology partnerships. We were delighted to note that India was the third largest export destination and seventh largest trading partner for Bolivia.

6. We agreed to further expand our business ties in pharmaceuticals and health care; automobiles and engineering; machinery and textile; and metals and minerals. We also expressed strong desire to strengthen

our partnership in the lithium sector. We see scope for joint collaboration in critical and innovative technologies of mutual interest in areas like software and biotechnology, space technology, digital science and telecommunications, agriculture and food processing and renewable energy and climate change.

7. These areas at the B2B level would be discussed during the India-Bolivia Business Forum later today. I look forward to jointly inaugurating the Forum with President Morales.

8. India feels privileged to share its development experience with Bolivia under the framework of South-South Cooperation. In this spirit, we are happy to offer US$ 100 million Line of Credit to Bolivia for financing development projects.

9. We are happy to have Bolivia as a partner in the International Solar Alliance and welcome the signing of the framework agreement establishing the bond. In addition, we have signed eight MoUs in the fields of culture, Visa waiver arrangement for diplomats, exchange between diplomatic academies, mining, space, traditional medicine, establishment of Centre of Excellence in IT and Bi-Oceanic Railway project. I am happy that later today I would have an occasion to talk to the youth in Bolivia at the Gabriel Rene Moreno Autonomous University on the life and legacy of Mahatma Gandhi. I will also unveil a plaque naming an auditorium after Mahatma Gandhi. I thank our Bolivian hosts for this tribute to mark the 150th Birth Anniversary of our father of nation being celebrated this year.

10. President Morales and I renewed our commitment to strengthen global partnership. I thanked him for his strong condemnation of the recent Pulwama terror attack in the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir, perpetrated from across the border. We agreed to work together to defeat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We also agreed on the need for reform of the UN Security Council to make it reflective of contemporary realities.

11. I once again thank President Morales for his friendship and for his deep commitment to India-Bolivia relations.

Muchas Gracias.

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