

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED BY PRESIDENT OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA**

Malabo, April 8, 2018

Buenos Dias,

Excellency, it is indeed a great honour for me to visit your beautiful country on what is the first State Visit from India. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you Mr. President for your warmth and gracious hospitality. This is reflective of our close friendship and cordial relationship.

2. Both India and Equatorial Guinea have a shared past and are working together for a sustainable future. We have both emerged from the shadows of a colonial past and are committed to peace, prosperity and well-being of our peoples. Today, India and Equatorial Guinea are engaged in the task of ensuring accelerated growth and distributing its benefits to all sections of our two societies. In this regard, your National Horizon 2020 programme has a vital role to play. I am very happy to learn that under Your Excellency's guidance, the first phase of the plan has been successfully executed and the second phase, which aims at transforming your country into an emerging economy, has been under vigorous implementation.

3. Excellency, our two countries have much in common. It is, therefore, natural to expect that our bilateral engagement should also be more intense and diversified. We were privileged to host you Mr. President during the third India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi in 2015. We were equally honoured to welcome you in India last month for the International Solar Alliance Founding Conference. Your visits have given a new impetus to our ties. India remains equally committed to strengthen and build its relations with Equatorial Guinea. In keeping with this, I am happy that we have taken an in-principle decision to open our Diplomatic Mission in Malabo. This would mark a new beginning in our bilateral journey.

4. Excellency, your country is aiming at diversifying its economy. I would like to assure you that India would be happy to partner you in every

which way that you want. We are also keen to enhance our development cooperation partnership in keeping with the cherished values of South–South Cooperation. It is in that spirit that we have offered assistance to set up an Entrepreneurial Development Centre and an English Language Laboratory here. We would also do our best to support you in agriculture, mining, health, tele-communication and Information Technology.

5. Excellency, your country has made a new beginning at the global stage this year. I once again congratulate you on your term at the UN Security Council and wish you all success. Excellency, you have been in the forefront of developments in the African Union and worked hard to promote peace, prosperity and unity on this continent, and in this region. We deeply appreciate your leadership on this score. Our two countries are working together in the international fora. We must stand united in support of reforms at the United Nations and beyond. We share common concern on Climate Change and sustainable development. To this end, I hope our partnership under the framework of the International Solar Alliance will bear meaningful results. My optimism reminds me of a famous guinea proverb and I quote: *“No matter how long the winter, spring is sure to follow”*-unquote.

6. Excellency, today is a special and historic day for India-Equatorial Guinea friendship. May it grow taller than Pico basile and stronger than the Ceiba tree !

7. On this happy note, may I invite Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen to join me in raising a toast:

- to the health and well-being of President of Equatorial Guinea and First lady;
- to the progress and happiness of the friendly people of Equatorial Guinea; and
- to the enduring friendship between our two countries.

Muchas Gracias
