

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND  
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF  
EQUATORIAL GUINEA**

Malabo, April 8, 2018

Good morning

Buenos dias

1. I am extremely privileged to have the opportunity to address this House. This is my first visit to Equatorial Guinea. All three of my state visits since taking over as President of India in July 2017 have been to Africa. This is acknowledgement of India's close and abiding relationship with your continent. And as it happens, Equatorial Guinea is the furthest west that I have travelled from India since becoming President of my country.
2. Not far from here, in the Gulf of Guinea, is the point where zero degree latitude meets zero degree longitude, where the Equator and the Prime Meridian intersect. In a sense this is the centre of the world. And this is where nature has located you – close to the geographical pivot of our world, of our sense of space and time, and our notion of direction and navigation. These are the very qualities we look to in Equatorial Guinea as it rises as a force for stability in this region. Both the location and, much more than that, the warm welcome I have received have made this visit truly special. Thank you.
3. I am especially happy to be here in the year in which you celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of your independence from colonialism. We in India can appreciate your sentiments. Only a few months ago, in August 2017, India celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Independence from imperial rule. It was an unforgettable and emotional moment for us. And an occasion to look back at the challenges and struggles that previous generations faced to bring us freedom.
4. I am sure such memories and such experiences are still fresh in the minds of all of you, and of the people of Equatorial Guinea.

And I am sure they inspire you to strive harder to secure and build on that hard-won freedom, to fulfil the dreams of all your citizens. Towards that endeavour, I come with the greetings, friendship and commitment of the 1.3 billion people of India. The waters of the oceans have united our civilisations. Diplomacy is catching up. I am happy to announce that very soon India will be opening its embassy in Equatorial Guinea, in fact in this city.

#### Honourable Members

5. Our histories are similar; our recent exchanges too have been purposeful. I was honoured to host His Excellency, the President of Equatorial Guinea during his visit to India in March 2018 for the inaugural summit of the International Solar Alliance. We were seated next to each other at the banquet and had a very meaningful conversation. Your President's dedication to the cause of clean energy is impressive and infectious. Sustainable development is only possible through judicious use of our planet's finite resources. This requires combating climate change for not only ourselves but for future generations. Due to its oceanic location, Equatorial Guinea understands this better than many others.
6. I am particularly heartened that Equatorial Guinea has shown such commitment to renewable energy and to addressing climate change. This is despite your country being a significant producer and exporter of crude oil. You have placed a long-term global vision above short-term gains. This is evidence that Equatorial Guinea has the enlightenment and the strategic generosity of a leader nation – a leader nation for Africa and beyond.
7. In this context, I congratulate your country for having been elected to the United Nations Security Council for a two-year term that began in January this year. We wish to work with you to make the UN more effective, more equitable, and more reflective of today's realities. We are confident that you will play an active role in highlighting issues related to Africa and to developing countries in general – as well as challenges that are of a global nature.

8. The menace of terrorism – and its ancillaries such as drug-trafficking and money laundering – are a sad reality of our times. Terrorism is a global challenge, but it is being dealt with piecemeal. A comprehensive global strategy needs to be established. In this regard, we in India seek your support for early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism at the UN.

Honourable Members

9. Equatorial Guinea and India have shared attributes and challenges. You represent one of Africa's strongest economies. India is the world's fastest-growing major economy. The aspiration for both of us is to take the urgent and necessary steps to become developed countries, to bring the benefits of our economic growth to all sections of our societies, and to create an environment for young people to realise their potential. In this India is ready to support Equatorial Guinea as per your developmental priorities, and as per a process shaped and led by you.
10. We have strong bilateral trade in energy. Equatorial Guinea is an important and trusted source of natural gas for India. On its part, India has robust and established capacities in refining of crude oil and manufacture of petroleum products. We would like to share this knowledge and this learning with you, as you develop and build refineries in your country. It is crucial that Equatorial Guinea and local communities here gain from the value addition to natural resources that are found in your country.
11. As you seek to diversify your economy, you will find India a credible partner. We can work together to build capacities in agriculture and mining, in fisheries and public health, in food processing and telecom and IT. Geologists from India can assist your technical specialists in surveying and mapping natural resources. Our agricultural technologists can help analyse the composition of soil on a particular farm or in a particular region. Such knowledge can enable farmers to identify the right nutrients for the soil – and improve productivity. This will give farming families and communities higher incomes.

12. Equatorial Guinea has been blessed with fertile land and natural resources. But your greatest assets are your people. Enhancing and sustaining the prosperity and well-being of your beautiful country requires enhancing the capacities of ordinary citizens, especially young people. Thousands of African students study in Indian universities. They come as students but they graduate as friends and ambassadors of India in their home countries. We would like more and more students from Equatorial Guinea to access our institutions of higher learning.

13. India is also happy to cooperate in vocational training, skill development and incubation of entrepreneurship, especially in small and medium enterprises. As we have found in India, the SME sector can be a big job creator and an effective mechanism to distribute prosperity. In other areas too, such as building English-language centres, there is much that India can unhesitatingly contribute.

#### Honourable Members

14. The Equatorial Guinea-India partnership is for both our countries, but it is also a partnership for the world. As sea-faring societies, we are equally conscious of the safety and security of our oceans – and of the continued need for a transparent and rules-based order of maritime governance. The Atlantic and Indian Oceans are sisters. Their oceanic systems are interlinked – and so are their security challenges and, often, the threats of humanitarian disasters.

15. These challenges have to be met with concerted efforts. Our countries must collaborate more on maritime security. We must work together to ensure that the seas spread harmony, create friendships and promote trade and commerce. In defence as much as in disaster planning and preparedness, India would be glad to cooperate still more with Equatorial Guinea, and offer its technical and other capacities. These are our oceans and our challenges. Let us address them ourselves – and not cede that space, as we once did, to others.

16. Our world is sometimes likened to a village. We are all stakeholders. There are global commons that we must care for and there are global concerns that we must take care of. As colonialism has receded on the ground, we need to work together to ensure that some variant does not return in other dimensions – whether outer space or cyberspace. As a member of the Security Council, Equatorial Guinea has a responsibility here.

17. India stands with you as you work towards fulfilling that responsibility – and as you march towards your national developmental goals. On behalf of the people and government of India, as well as in my personal capacity, I once again assure the people and government of Equatorial Guinea of our enduring partnership.

Thank you all.

Muchas gracias