

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI Ram Nath Kovind
at the Banquet hosted in honour of President of the French
Republic and Heads of State/Government attending the
founding conference of the international solar alliance**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, March 10, 2018

It is an honour for me to welcome you Mr. President and Madame Macron on your first State Visit to India.

That your State Visit is taking place on the eve of the International Solar Alliance Founding Conference makes it even more special.

I also warmly welcome Presidents, Vice Presidents, Prime Ministers, Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers from over 45 countries and Heads of International Organisations present here. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts for their support for the International Solar Alliance. With such high commitment from the distinguished leaders, I can only say that the event tomorrow will be a resounding success.

Excellency,

India and France are special friends. We are united by a common vision of the world - a world under-pinned by democratic values and peaceful co-existence. We both strive for a multi-polar world predicated on a rules-based global order.

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of our Strategic Partnership this year, it is time for us to reflect on our bilateral journey thus far. Our two countries are working together in almost every aspect of human endeavour; from fashion, food to outer space.

At the same time, our strategic cooperation is advancing in new areas. The Indian Ocean Region, cyber space and the world of next generation technology pose limitless possibilities for our joint action.

We stand at the threshold of becoming technological and manufacturing partners in cutting edge defence cooperation, even as we enhance the operational links between our militaries.

We see France as an important partner in our quest for clean and renewable energy and for a sustainable future.

Excellency,

The Indian economy is on a high growth trajectory. Our Make In India, Digital India, Start-up India and Clean India programmes are laced with prospects. These offer manifold opportunities to your companies. I am happy that we already have a

large number of French companies engaged in smart cities, infrastructure and railways in India. We are keen to further strengthen this ongoing partnership.

Excellency,

Our global partnership is in an expansive mode. We should continue to work together, with ever greater commitment, for peace, security and stability around us.

Our cooperation on security is growing. In terrorism, we face a common enemy. We need to re-double our efforts to fight this evil.

We truly appreciate the support we have received from you as we rightfully claim our place on high tables.

Excellency,

Our cultural engagement has been deep and varied. French curiosity in Indian philosophy and epics has led to praise-worthy scholarly works.

We Indians love cinema and in you we find an engaging partner, be it the works of Jean Renoir or the carnival at Cannes.

This year has a special significance for our spiritual and cultural connection; we are celebrating 50 years of the founding of Auro-ville, an Indo-French home in our country.

Excellency, we are both committed to a sustainable world. For this to happen, we need to give our youths more opportunities to interact and engage with each other. I am hopeful that our new understandings on mobility, skill and education will open new doors for them.

Excellency, the International Solar Alliance tomorrow would embark on a gleaming future. The large presence of distinguished leaders from the four corners of planet at the Conference tomorrow is an assertion that, and I quote - "*we did not inherit our future from our ancestors; we have borrowed it from our children*"- Unquote. It is this shared realization of our debt to the future that has led us to craft the International Solar Alliance.

President Macron, we commend your efforts towards fight against climate change. You can count on India as a trusted partner in this endeavour.

With these words, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen, I invite you to raise a toast :

- to the good health and success of President Macron and Madame Brigitte Macron;
- to the good health and success of distinguished leaders present here;
- to the progress and prosperity of the friendly people of France; and
- to the ever- lasting friendship between India and France.

Thank You.