

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,  
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAVANA**

**HAVANA, JUNE 22, 2018**

1. I am delighted to be here at the University of Havana to share my thoughts with you on the subject - “India and the Global South”. I have chosen to speak on this theme as it happens to be central to both Cuban and Indian foreign policy. And it is an area of multilateral engagement, where we have seen real and robust impact of close India-Cuba cooperation, with both countries playing a stellar role in powering South-South Cooperation and standing up for a stronger voice for the Global South or Developing Countries. The solidarity of the Global South lay at the heart of the international vision of your great leader and statesman, Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution. In that sense, my talk today is a tribute to his contribution and vision to make the world a better place for the citizens of the developing world.
2. Dear Students, this temple of knowledge founded in 1728 is one of the oldest institutions in the Americas. It must be a privilege for you to be part of this illustrious Campus. Not far from where I speak, was the theatre of many fiery speeches by Fidel Castro in the lead-up to the Cuban Revolution, then a young law student at the University.
3. In India, we have great respect for your country and your many achievements. Our warmth and friendship has been a guiding force for those who believe that the people of the Third World, or what is now called the “Global South” must come together to create a more meaningful place for themselves in the Global Order.
4. Yesterday, I had the honour and privilege to pay my respects to your great leader Fidel Castro in Santiago de Cuba. I could not have begun my journey to Cuba on a more meaningful note. He was a

great friend of India, one who lent dignity and strength to the voice of developing countries in the international arena. His leadership and his pride shall continue to inspire millions across the world. You as today's youth of Cuba are proud inheritors of his lasting legacy. As I speak of El Comandante, memory takes me back to the days of the triumph of Cuban Revolution. Those were the times when newly independent developing countries were looking to occupy their place in the comity of nations. The Bandung Conference of 1955 was perhaps the first collective voice of the developing countries demanding that their sovereignty and territorial integrity be respected. This led to the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement and the formation of the Group of 77 at the United Nations. Out of this solidarity was born South-South Cooperation which till today forms the bedrock of development partnership within developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

5. I also had the opportunity to pay respects to your National Hero Jose Marti and the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, in Havana today. These two immortal men helped us win our freedom. Both were strong advocates of nations and peoples taking charge of their destiny, of their rights and responsibilities. We very much see these principles powering the politics and togetherness of the Global South today. The values of South-South Cooperation have stood us in good stead. Mutual respect and solidarity among developing countries form the core of it. The success of South-South Cooperation must encourage our developed country partners to see how best these modalities can be utilized by them as well. The decision of the United Nations for hosting the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation in Buenos Aires in 2019 is a welcome move.
6. Dear Students, India-Cuba relations have been strong and deep ever since we established our diplomatic ties. Today, I had detailed discussions with President Diaz-Canal on the way forward for our bilateral engagement. We also elaborated on our multilateral

partnership. For both Cuba and India, Development Partnership has been at the centre of our international relations. Cuba's famed medical missions and doctors have brought health benefits to millions across the developing world. Thousands of annual medical scholarships offered by Cuba to countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia is unparalleled anywhere in the world. The Cuban Adult Literacy Programme - "*Yo, Si Puedo*" has been successful in the remotest corners of the world.

7. In solidarity with our friends in developing countries, India has also been in the forefront of imparting training and capacity building in the Global South. Our wider approach has been to impart skills, build technical capacity, provide concessional finance and allow preferential market access. We started in the right earnest in 1949, just after our independence, with 70 scholarships. Today, the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation platform, along with its sister programmes, offers 10,000 scholarships annually to beneficiaries in over 160 countries. I am happy that our Cuban friends also have benefitted from this programme. Our commitment to Africa is deep and abiding. We have extended a Line of Credit of US Dollars 10 billion for financing development projects in Africa as per their request and priority. Out of these, US Dollars 2 billion has been earmarked for projects under the International Solar Alliance.
8. Dear Students, India has placed science and technology at the centre of its development cooperation strategy. Recently, I inaugurated a Centre for Geo-informatics Applications in Rural Development in Madagascar built by our assistance. The Centre would bring the fruits of space technology to boost agriculture on the island nation. Our PAN-AFRICAN E-NETWORK, a satellite-based ICT platform connecting over 50 countries in Africa with Centers of Excellence in India, is bringing the joys of tele-education and tele-medicine to a large number of people in the continent. We have also been quick to factor in the changing technology landscape in our approach. We have accordingly, started programmes on Artificial

Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Robotics, Renewable energy and Nanotechnology. These could well be a game-changer for development across the Global South.

9. In recent years, we have begun several new initiatives in India. Our AADHAR programme, which is the largest Unique Identification programme in the world, has become a key enabler of development. Our financial inclusion project the JAN DHAN YOJANA has allowed us to open 316 million bank accounts in the last three years for those who never had access to banking services. Under our micro-credit programme MUDRA, we have extended 128 million loans worth more than US dollars 90 billion, with 74% beneficiaries being women. The JAM trinity or the JAN DHAN-AADHAR-MOBILE TELEPHONY has made delivery of public services efficient and transparent. We stand ready to share our development experience with fellow developing countries.
10. Dear Students, Development Partnership secures the interests of the Global South, but only partially. We have to work together to push for greater space for developing countries in global governance structures. In this context, we must give a greater push for reform of the United Nations including the Security Council. Similarly, the Bretton Woods Institutions must factor in the growing weight of the countries of the South in their decision making. Alongside our reform agenda, we must counter any move to weaken multilateralism. Preserving a rules-based global trading order remains critical to promote the interests of developing countries. At the World Trade Organization Doha Round of Negotiations, it is essential that issues of food security and livelihoods are given utmost sanctity.
11. Globalization may have lifted millions out of poverty but the unmet needs in developing countries still remain. The growth agenda centered on poverty eradication, therefore, must be at the heart of the global development discourse. We must also push for greater

availability of finance and technology to help developing countries combat Climate Change and meet their development needs.

12. Dear Students, so far our mutual engagement within and with the Global South has principally been on two tracks: one, sharing expertise and resources with each other to lift the standards of living of people, and two, seeking greater voice for developing countries in global governance. This strategy will continue to be seminal. But we have to account for the changes that are sweeping the world. Geopolitical shifts are challenging multilateralism and multi-polarity. We have to protect both. On the technology side, the Fourth Industrial Revolution powered by Artificial Intelligence, cyberspace and automation presents both challenges and opportunities for us. The Global South must take lead and see how these changes can help them leapfrog their development process. Further, developing countries rich in solar energy and traditional knowledge should have a focused approach to harness them to meet their development needs.
13. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Global South has come a long way in its journey since the 1960's. Today, the Group stands stronger and taller. Yes, it is a diverse Group with countries at various levels of development. But it is important that the unity of the Group be preserved. That's how we can strengthen multilateralism and promote Right to Development for all. As Jose Marti said, and I quote "*One just principle from the depth of a cave is more powerful than an army*". Unquote. The argument of the Global South is indeed firm and strong. India and Cuba have been at the forefront of protecting the interest of the Global South. Let us continue with our solidarity. I wish you all a bright future.
  - VIVA CUBA
  - VIVA INDIA