**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED IN HIS HONOUR
BY THE PRESIDENT OF CROATIA**

Zagreb, March 26, 2019

1. Thank you, Madam President, for your gracious words. Today is a red-letter day in our bilateral relationship. It is an honour for me to be paying the first ever State Visit from India to your beautiful country. We are, indeed, touched by your warmth and hospitality.

2. Today, we had excellent discussion on the way forward for our ties. We signed key agreements in the fields of tourism, sports and culture. We also agreed to strengthen our global partnership including our fight against terrorism.

3. Last year, Croatia took global centre-stage after its amazing performance in the FIFA World Cup. Your Excellency's personal gestures in support of your national team touched the hearts of millions in India. We cheered for your team and for its indomitable spirit. Croatia now has many new young friends in India!

4. Our two countries enjoy historical and cultural linkages, from Dubrovnik to Goa, and from spices to spirituality. We are impressed by the deep interest shown by your people in Indian culture and philosophy, in Vedas and Sanskrit, and in Yoga and Ayurveda. Similarly, Croatia has attracted many Indian scholars. Our national poet, Rabindranath Tagore, had visited Zagreb in 1926.

5. The Independence of Croatia coincided with a new phase of liberalization of our economy. The growth story of India, particularly over the last few years, and your journey as a member country of the European Union, hold immense promise for our economic partnership. We have today committed to work together to make this flourish. I am confident that a bright future awaits our relationship.

6. With these words, ladies and gentlemen, may I propose a toast to the:

- health and happiness of the President of the Republic of   Croatia and Mr. Kitarovic;
-    continued progress and prosperity of the friendly people of Croatia; and
- enduring friendship between India and Croatia.

Thank you!