

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND ON THE OCCASION OF CALL BY
THE HEADS OF MISSION**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, June 30, 2018

1. I warmly welcome you to Rashtrapati Bhavan. I am delighted to meet you and to share my thoughts with you.
2. You are here for the HOM Conference. This platform allows you to exchange ideas with your colleagues, get plugged with the latest in India and, most importantly, to synergize your efforts as one team to implement what the country expects from you. I am particularly happy with the programme of the Conference this year. It encapsulates the changes sweeping the world and spotlights what ought to be the thrust areas for our diplomacy, today and tomorrow.
3. There are tectonic shifts taking place in the world, and not just in the realm of geopolitics and geoeconomics. Technology, communication and societal mores are also changing rapidly. Terrorism and nonconventional threats pose a constant challenge to our security. To manage India's rise in such an environment is not an easy task. You have to be a master at strategic thinking, nimble-footed action and be able to quickly adapt to change. As a nation today, we are thinking and doing big. Our Prime Minister and his dynamic leadership have unleashed a transformational change in the country. To the outside world, India is seen as a country on the rise, a nation on the march. We are the fastest growing major economy in the world. More importantly, the fruits of this development and growth are reaching the common people-the poor and the marginalized first - be it the UJJWALA programme, the MUDRA scheme or the JAN DHAN YOJANA. The success of our MARS Mission and the circumnavigation of the globe by all-woman Navy team is reflective of a new and bold

confidence in the country. This self-belief and optimism must show in our work abroad.

4. The government has a clear and well marked approach to diplomacy today. The litmus test of our engagement with the external world is to be measured against what we are able to do to propel domestic growth and development. You are doing well on this account. And when you do so, there is expectation for much more, especially when the country aspires for a transformational change. The Indian growth story and our flagship programmes be it Make in India, Digital India, Skill India, Smart Cities or Start-up India, have a multilayered connect with the external world. As diplomats, it is part of your mandate to secure new investments, scout for appropriate technologies, create markets for Make-in-India products and bring the best of business practices to India. You have a direct role in making things happen on the ground, be it creating jobs or enhancing farm incomes.
5. India's rise and transformation also depends on how we are perceived abroad. Our material progress must go hand in hand with a positive acknowledgement of our thoughts and ideas, and the value we bring to the global community. The world is looking for answers from India on many counts. We will soon be beginning our celebrations of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. In our events the world over, we must highlight the timeless values that Bapu has enriched us with. On sustainability and climate change, we have taken the lead through the International Solar Alliance and our continued commitment to the Paris Agreement. We have ably demonstrated what Yoga, Ayurveda and traditional knowledge can do for the health and wellbeing of people across the world. And not just that, we are sharing our resources and capacities with the global community, to help them prosper, to help them lead healthy lives and to help them when in distress. In the last four years, we have evacuated over 90,000 Indians in distress abroad. Along with them, we have

also rescued nationals of over 50 other countries. What more could demonstrate our belief in the age-old philosophy of “*VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM*” or “*the World is One Family*”.

6. I have paid State Visits to 10 countries since I took office as the President of India in July 2017. Seven of these countries are in Africa. I would like to share some of my experiences with you. India’s graph is rising. In such a situation, there is little choice for us but to engage all segments of our host society outside. My official programme abroad has so far been drawn keeping this seminal understanding in mind. It has given me a deeper insight into the countries I have visited and what they expect from India. A multi-stakeholder approach in your work, therefore, is absolutely critical to secure the best results, be it promoting business, connecting with the scientific community or simply making a public outreach.
7. In developing countries and especially in Africa, we have undertaken a large number of infrastructure, education, health and agricultural projects. I have seen firsthand the goodwill they have generated for us. I would emphasise that timely implementation of our ongoing development projects, where the highest quality is assured, can add tremendous depth to our partnership, especially at the popular level. It would also create more space and receptivity for our future projects. Talking of connecting with people - I must add that Indian art, music and cinema have many, many champions abroad. There is tremendous interest in Indian culture, cuisine and soft power. I am happy that you would be dwelling on this theme at the Conference to see how to approach them.
8. Engaging the different States of India is a vital part of our diplomacy today. I see real value of “*twinning arrangements*” in promoting people-to-people relations between our States and diaspora countries. Today, there are higher expectations from us as a country from our citizens living outside. On this

account, I must compliment our External Affairs Minister for her exemplary leadership and work. She has given a new confidence to our people abroad in the ability of our Government to reach out to them when in need. Our Missions and our Ambassadors today are seen as responsive to public needs, always ready to give a helping hand to our citizens, to members of the Indian diaspora or to anybody else. Our E-Visa scheme, similarly, has come in for praise from all quarters.

9. I have also sensed that our friends and partners abroad have equally high expectations from us. They want us to play a greater global role. How do we do it? What must we do to measure up to their expectations? I am sure these are some of the questions that you will be grappling with during the Conference.
10. I wish you the very best for your deliberations at the Conference and for your assignments abroad. Do remember that you don't just represent the Indian state and the Government of India. You represent 1.3 billion Indians, and their hopes and aspirations. You represent our diverse and plural culture, you represent the richness of our 5000 year old civilization and you represent a society that in its essence is a force for good and for stability in an unpredictable world. All this places great responsibility upon each one of you. I am confident you will continue to fulfill that responsibility, as you always have, as professional diplomats and as selfless servants of India.

Thank You.
Jai Hind.