

## **III India-EU Forum on Effective Multilateralism 2011**

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**Indian Council of World Affairs, Sapru House, New Delhi**

**Welcome remarks by H.E Danièle Smadja,  
Ambassador, Head of the EU Delegation to India**

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Dear Ambassador Devare,  
Dr Luis Peral,  
Distinguished participants and guests,

I am delighted to be here with you today for this third edition of the Forum - a joint venture that started two years ago in New Delhi thanks to the pioneering spirit of Ambassador Devare and ICWA, and the European Union Institute for Security Studies; they joined efforts to make this initiative a success.

I hope that the choice of topics for this Forum, combining traditional and non traditional security matters with economic issues and exchanges on experiences with democracy and “diversity” will give us ample food for thought.

If we want to constantly re-charge our relationship with fresh impetus and ideas, this kind of initiatives is to be welcome as it provides opportunities for friends of EU-India relations to discuss topics of common concern in a less formal setting than inter-governmental meetings.

As many of you know it has been four years since I arrived in India and since then many things have changed in Europe and in India as well as in the way we interact together. But we still need to go some way towards developing a clearer understanding of our respective views, policies and institutional set ups. We also still need to go some way towards identifying more synergies and additional opportunities for cooperation across the policy board.

I am sure that during this Forum you will exchange interesting views on the reasons which make the European Union and India natural partners in many ways. Yet you will also come to the conclusion that the potential of our strategic partnership is far from being fulfilled. This is not new and is not bad news either.

Ours is a broad partnership, including dialogue and cooperation in fields as diverse as climate change, environment, energy, transport, science and technology, nuclear research and safety, security, agriculture, textiles, education, human rights, statistics, macroeconomic affairs, culture, employment and labour issues, etc. ...and we are embarking in new security areas such as counter-terrorism, cyber-security and counter-piracy.

Ours is a partnership between global actors and global players that have a crucial part to play and a share of global responsibilities in addressing matters of common concern and in tackling global issues.

Ours is also a partnership between a sovereign nation and a unique regional organisation with no aim of replacing the relations which exist between our Member States and India.

All these articulations or interfaces to be organised as well as the interests or added value to be identified cannot be worked out overnight. It takes time, mutual understanding and respect.

You will have understood that by talking about the unfulfilled potential of our strategic partnership I am not lamenting and I am not frustrated. I am optimistic because of the many reasons at the origin of this unfulfilled potential.

Firstly, there is an issue of perception. Many observers of our relationship believe that the EU cannot meet some of India's main demands. For example, delivering on a permanent seat for India in the UN Security Council or engaging in full nuclear, defence or intelligence gathering cooperation.

It is true that the EU does not have today a common position on the reform of the Security Council; but this does not mean that the EU does not find the request of India legitimate. Similarly, many Europeans find India hesitant - despite its impressive achievements since the 1990's and its emerging global status - in signing up to the kind of ambitious multilateral commitments regarding trade, climate change, non-proliferation and some other areas which Europeans

hold dear. This does not mean that India is not in favour of multilateralism, does it?

I could give more examples of different perceptions, but you got my point.

We will change these perceptions by improving our mutual understanding. And we will improve our mutual understanding by talking more often to each other at all levels – through political and civil society channels involving parliamentarians, academics, NGOs etc.

Secondly, we are both in a transition as regards our foreign policy. Indian foreign policy is going through a consolidation and many of its partners are asking India to take up more responsibility. While in the EU we have developed significant expertise in conflict prevention and crisis management over the last two decades or so, we still have to fulfil the promises of the Lisbon Treaty - though many things are already being done at EU level: from patrolling the shores of the Gulf of Aden to training Somali Government troops; from coordinating evacuation of nationals in crises (as we saw in Libya) to coordinating responses to irregular immigration flows; from developing additional tools and mechanisms, such as the new CSDP structures, to the experiments underway with mobility partnerships.

We therefore need to get more familiar with each other evolution and we need to learn from each other.

Thirdly, EU and India want to get closer, but are often driven by geopolitical considerations – our global stature, our relations with China or the USA, our regional affinities or respective neighbourhood – or by the need to respond to regional crisis. Affinities with BRICS - as far as India is concerned - or a strong neighbourhood policy in its Mediterranean and Central European vicinity for the EU are perfectly understandable.

But this should not distract us from developing our bilateral agenda in line with what the Prime Minister of India said at the Summit in Brussels last year: "India is ready to engage with the EU across the policy board". This should not distract us from achieving the most ambitious and comprehensive trade and investment agreement (FTA) however difficult this can be given the scope and the sensitivities at play. In the coming months political leadership will have to be seen on both sides to forge the necessary compromises and to take the necessary risks for the FTA negotiations to be finalised.

Let me conclude by saying that there is certainly room for improvement in our bilateral relations and on many fronts. To my mind this is in the natural course of things given the time needed to build a strong and meaningful strategic partnership. Remember, we *only* started this journey 7 years ago. Over this period the world context has changed, the EU has a new Treaty and India has evolved. Over this period we have achieved much more than what you can see. This is because we were busy laying the foundation of our strategic partnership and of the various cooperation sectors. Few

building blocks are there too. We need to identify more of them – and the FTA is essential - and soon we will all be able to see the results.

In the meantime we need to all contribute to the edifice and with this Forum, you will.

Thank you for your attention.