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Home > Media Center > Speeches & Statements

Remarks by Gen. (Dr) V. K. Singh (Retd.), Minister of State for External Affairs at the 7th East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Manila, Philippines (August 07, 2017)

August 09, 2017

Excellencies,

1. At the outset, on behalf of the Indian delegation and on my own personal behalf, I convey my sincere thanks to His Excellency, Mr. Alan Peter Cayetano, for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to us and the excellent arrangements made for our stay as well as our meeting today.
2. From the Indian perspective, ASEAN occupies a central place in the security architecture of the Asia-Pacific region. It is our view that ASEAN, placed at the cultural, commercial and physical cross-roads of the region, has a unique ability to reflect and harmonize larger interests of the world beyond it. ASEAN has celebrated this ability by playing a critical role in conceptualizing and implementing the East Asia Summit process.
3. We are appreciative of Philippines, as Chair, ensuring that EAS remains a Leaders-led forum for dialogue on broad strategic and political issues of common interest and concern. The proposal to empower our Ambassadors in Jakarta to continue the ongoing discussion on Regional Security Architecture in addition to discussing implementation of Leaders' decisions on issues of regional and international import, shall contribute to making the East Asia Summit process more pro-active and relevant. The regular engagement among our Ambassadors in Jakarta, who have met three times since the last summit held in September 2016 is a welcome development in this regard.

Excellencies,

4. We are celebrating the golden jubilee of establishment of the ASEAN at a time when the Asia Pacific region is aglow with the warm glow of shared progress and sustainable development. This however, is offset with geo-political ambitions manifesting itself in unilateral attempts at determination and appropriation of global commons.
5. Shared prosperity demands co-operation. Secure and open sea lanes are critical for peace, stability, prosperity and development. In this context, India reiterates the importance of freedom of navigation and overflight on the high seas, unimpeded lawful commerce, as well as resolving maritime disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law notably the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

6. Making Maritime cooperation a priority and central to our discourse will contribute to fostering, among us, a sense of creation of a maritime community, with common interests and purpose and to empower us to respond effectively to the shared maritime challenges of the region. Carrying the process forward, we would be hosting the third EAS Conference on Maritime Safety and Security later this year.

Excellencies,

7. We are of firm belief that connectivity initiatives must be based on universally recognized international norms, good governance, rule of law, openness, transparency and equality. We share the international communities desire for enhancing physical as well as softer forms of connectivity and believes in transparent development of infrastructure and the use of responsible debt financing practices while underlining respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Excellencies,

8. In an era when networking amongst terrorists is reaching critical mass, a cohesive response which should include blocking of terror financing, countering the use of ICTs for terrorism purpose as well as countering the spread of violent extremism and radicalization is the need of the hour.
9. We should work together to ensure adherence to and implementation of United Nation Security Council Resolutions on Countering Terrorism, in particular resolutions no. 1267 and 2354, in letter as well as in spirit.
10. On a similar note, DPRK's continued pursuit of nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and its proliferation links, in violation of global concerns enshrined in the United Nation Security council resolution 2356 pose a grave threat to international peace and stability. India calls upon DPRK to refrain from such actions that undermine international peace and stability. We also urge the international community to work together to hold accountable all those parties that have supported these programmes.

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