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Press Statement by External Affairs Minister at the 5th Joint Commission Meeting Between India and Indonesia in Jakarta (January 05, 2018)

January 05, 2018

H.E. Ms. Retno Marsudi,
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Distinguished Members of Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

A very Good Evening.

Let me begin by wishing you all a very happy and fulfilling New Year. I would also like to thank Minister Retno for warm hospitality and courtesies extended to me and my delegation.

Today, after my arrival, I have had very good meeting with Foreign Minister Retno. We jointly co-chaired the 5th Meeting of the Joint Commission.

The Joint Commission meeting was held in a warm and friendly atmosphere. We reviewed whole gamut of bilateral relations.

After the successful visit of President Joko Widodo to India in December 2016, there is a new dynamism in our bilateral relations. Frequency of high level exchanges has significantly increased.

During our discussions, there was clear recognition that India and Indonesia, as two close maritime neighbours, are natural partners in peace and prosperity. We are two major countries in the Indo-Pacific region. This region is among the most dynamic regions in the world. We agreed to develop synergetic relationship to harness the potential of Indo-Pacific region and to meet the challenges that the region faces.

We unequivocally condemned terrorism in all its forms, irrespective of its motivation and origin. We expressed our strong opposition to any selective approaches to deal with this global menace, and called upon all countries to stop providing state sponsorship of terrorism and prevent their territories being used for establishing terrorist safe havens.

Indonesia as one of the largest country, the most diverse democracy, and the biggest economy in ASEAN region has a critical role to play in evolution of the new security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region.

FM Retno conveyed Indonesia's determination to play its part and make due contributions to the ongoing efforts to strengthen rule and respect of law. I welcomed it and conveyed India's commitment for peace, security and development in the region.

We agreed to enhance our consultations and cooperation on maritime issues including on UNCLOS with a view to strengthen rule of law and to ensure the freedom of navigation and safety of sea lanes of communication.

FM Retno expressed appreciation for increase of Indian tourists to Indonesia. We agreed on expansion of civil aviation links to further enhance bilateral economic and tourism ties.

I expressed the importance of addressing the high trade deficit that India has with Indonesia and conveyed that the best way to address this issue is not to restrict trade but to increase it.

We agreed to work together for a balanced and sustainable trade by providing greater market access, both in goods and services.

We also discussed the increasing demand for skill development in both our countries given that we have a large proportion of young population. I conveyed that India will continue its skill development assistance in the form of short term training program and scholarships.

Currently India offers close to 150 training slots and scholarships. We agreed to further strengthen our cooperation in education sector. FM Retno expressed desire to further deepen cooperation in ICT and healthcare especially pharmaceutical sector.

I conveyed our readiness to work with Indonesia in these areas.

I expressed my appreciation that President Joko Widodo has accepted Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's invitation to join the ASEAN Special Commemorative Summit as Guest of Honour at India's Republic Day celebrations, along with other ASEAN Head of States and Heads of Government, in New Delhi on 25-26 January.

Overall, the meeting today was substantive, productive and future oriented. I believe that the Fifth Meeting of the Joint Commission would lead to further deepening of the strategic partnership between our two countries.

Tomorrow, along with Foreign Minister Retno, I will jointly inaugurate the ASEAN India Think Tanks Forum. This Forum brings key thinkers of India and all the ASEAN countries under one roof to brainstorm on pressing challenges and future orientation of our engagement. For India, relations with ASEAN region is a key priority. It is at the core of our Act East Policy.

I hope that the AINTT meeting will come up with good suggestions and ideas for further strengthening of India-ASEAN partnership.

Thank you.



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