

**Statement by Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi**  
**Minister of State for External Affairs Government of India**  
**at the Sixth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence**  
**Building Measures in Asia (CICA)**

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*Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan*

H.E. the President of Kazakhstan,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,

I bring to you the warm greetings of my Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and billion plus Indians for a successful summit. I would also like to convey his warm regards to the President of Kazakhstan Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev as the Chairperson of CICA Summit and I must compliment and congratulate the President for being a gracious host.

The year 2022 is an important milestone not just for India, but also for CICA. This year, India is celebrating 75 years of its independence, while CICA completes 30 years of its formation.

Over the last three decades, this forum has made commendable progress, and has played an important role in building confidence between countries of our large and diverse continent on a wide range of issues.

This is in tune with India's support for inclusive, consultative and cooperative multilateralism and our fundamental philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which means the world is one family.

This ancient tradition continues to guide India's foreign policy in general and naturally, this applies in even in greater measure to Asia.

Our belief is expressed in a variety of ways, including in meeting challenges and finding solutions together. This was clearly in evidence during the Covid pandemic. While providing for our own people, India did not abdicate its responsibility towards the humanity at large and this was discernible when we provided vaccines, medicines and medical supplies, as well as expertise to more than 150 nations.

India has exhibited its commitment to sustainable development through the flagship initiatives such as International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).

Digital India is a flagship programme of the Government of India with a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. In this regard, we endorse the CICA Leaders' Statement on Cooperation in the Field of Security of and in the Use of ICTs to strengthen cooperation in this field.

As one of the founding members of CICA, India had supported CICA's initiatives including organizing and participating in CICA activities. Recently, we assumed the role of CICA Coordinator on Counterterrorism and have proposed to conduct a workshop in this regard. India is currently the chair of the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee for 2022 and will host a special meeting in Mumbai and New Delhi on 28-29 October focussing on countering the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes. In addition to this, India's Ministry of Home Affairs will also hold a conference in the month of November 'No Money for Terror'.

Terrorism remains the biggest challenge and threat to our peace and continues to be the biggest violator of human rights in all its form. Terrorism like climate change and pandemics impacts us all. India follows a zero-tolerance approach towards terror and unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations including cross border terrorism.

For many decades, India has been affected particularly by the menace of cross-border terrorism sustained through financial, political and moral support of some states.

Excellencies,

It is unfortunate that Pakistan has chosen to once again misuse the CICA platform to propagate false and malicious propaganda against my country and distract from the theme and focus of today's discussions and cooperation among Member States.

The Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh have been and will remain an integral part of India. Pakistan has no locus standi to comment on India's internal affairs. Pakistan's remarks today constitute gross interference in India's internal affairs, sovereignty and territorial integrity which is inconsistent with the CICA Declaration on the Principles Guiding Relations between the CICA Member States of September 1999.

Pakistan is the global epicentre of terrorism and continues to be the source of terrorist activities including in India. Pakistan continues to make no investment in human development but provides their resources for creating and sustaining infrastructure of terrorism.

Pakistan must immediately cease anti-India cross-border terrorism and shut down its infrastructure of terrorism. It will do well to stop the grave and persistent human rights violations in Pakistan occupied Jammu, Kashmir & Ladakh (PoJKL); refrain from effecting any further material changes in the status of PoJKL; and vacate the Indian territories that are under its illegal and forcible occupation.

We desire normal relations with all our neighbours, including Pakistan. Pakistan is thereby advised to walk the talk by creating a conducive atmosphere, including by taking credible, verifiable and irreversible actions to not allow any territory under its control to be used for cross border terrorism against India in any manner. This will enable the two countries to engage and address issues bilaterally rather than distract this important international forum from its agenda of cooperation.

At the UN Security Council where India would be completing its tenure as a Member this year, counterterrorism has been one of our focus areas. I hope that CICA members will be able to enhance our cooperation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy (UNGCTS), which we will adopt later today.

Excellencies,

Since time immemorial, India has been a home to persecuted minorities fleeing from across the globe. India has been undertaking numerous initiatives for the socio-economic development of the minorities in line with our constitutional provisions like Articles 15, 16, 26, 30 of the Indian constitution. and I am happy to share that this year India has allocated 50.2 billion Rupees to the Minority Affairs Ministry for the welfare of the minorities.

With its own record of the dismal treatment of minority communities, Pakistan would be well advised to set its house in order instead of lecturing the world community. This is a country where religious and ethnic minorities are systematically persecuted. The frequent instances of attack and vandalism on the places of worship of minority communities in Pakistan and the countless cases of abduction, forced conversion and marriage of minor girls from minority communities in Pakistan are evidence of the vulnerable status of minorities in this country.

We have a special civilizational link with the Afghan people. In the current crisis, as a first responder India has provided humanitarian assistance to the tune of 50,000 metric tonnes of wheat and 500,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine and will continue to provide the same. There are thousands of Afghan nationals who continue to stay in India.

Excellencies,

The last few decades have seen the rise of Asia. We are faced with a diverse set of challenges to peace and security in Asia- of economic growth, food and energy security, connectivity deficits, low intra-regional trade and particularly, of environment. Connectivity initiatives should be based on the principles of transparency, broad participation, local priorities, financial sustainability and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.

As we go ahead, it is important to remember that our future remains closely intertwined. In this context, we view CICA as an important platform to promote multilateralism in diverse and multi-polar Asia.

On this historic occasion, it is pertinent to remember that for creating a platform to achieve the objective of a cooperative environment in Asia, the first CICA Summit was held in 2002 at Almaty, the former capital city of Kazakhstan.

The then Prime Minister of India Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee had participated in the first summit. Highlighting the unifying factors in Asia, he had noted: "All the nations of present-day Asia are, in some way or the other, products of the process of interaction and integration that has gone on in Asia throughout history. Therefore, in our tendency to focus on the conflicts of the day, we should not forget or belittle our shared past."

Our countries share a geography that has facilitated a rich commerce throughout history; the movement of goods, ideas and people travelling through the region. Our shared history has left common imprints on our languages, customs, societies, habits and traditions. Long ago, Sanatana Dharma and Buddhism had travelled along to many parts of our continent. Later, the Sufi saints' message of universal love and brotherhood echoed across India, Central Asia and beyond.

All the nations of present-day Asia are, in some way or the other, products of the process of interaction and integration that has gone on in Asia throughout history.

Excellencies,

We should work towards confidence-building measures that should actively promote economic cooperation, cultural interaction and people-to-people contacts. We should consistently strive to strengthen trade, investment, joint

ventures, and cooperation in science, technology and human resource development both within and among all the regions of Asia.

On behalf of India and on behalf of my Government, I congratulate Kazakhstan for leadership in steering various initiatives that seek to make CICA more relevant in the contemporary world.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.