77TH REPUBLIC DAY OF INDIA

INDIA AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

INTRODUCTION

India's relations with countries of the Global South have deep roots in shared histories, common struggles, and mutual aspirations for development and self-reliance.

Over the years India's role has evolved from being a leader in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to becoming a pivotal player in contemporary South-South cooperation. India's partnership with the Global South was propelled to a new level by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he organized the first Voice of the Global South Summit (VOGSS) on 12-13th January, 2023 within a few weeks of India taking over the Presidency of the G20.

This Summit was followed by another later during the year and a third one in 2024. Hon'ble Finance Minister of Eswatini, Mr. Neil Rijkenberg, represented the Kingdom of Eswatini in the VOGSS in 2024.

In addition to articulating the interests, priorities and aspirations of the Global South through several VOGSSs and raising these issues at all relevant fora, India also "Walks the Talk" and extends all possible assistance to countries of the Global South.

BACKGROUND

India's role within the Global South is pivotal, leveraging its growing economic power, democratic framework, and strategic geopolitical positioning to advocate for equitable global governance. India's development assistance programs to members of the Global South underscore its role as a partner in progress.

Through the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program, India has provided training, capacity building, and technical assistance to over 160 countries.

This program covers a wide range of areas, including healthcare, education, agriculture, and information technology, thereby contributing to human resource development in the Global South. Eswatini has also benefitted from the capacity building programmes under ITEC with 52 slots utilized in the current year 2025-26 in various sectors such as health policy, Ai, policing, forensics, EV technology, etc.

THE POLICY OF "VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM" (THE WORLD IS ONE FAMILY)

The spirit of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" has served as the guiding philosophy of India's foreign policy for the last more than a decade. This policy witnessed its fullest expression during India's Chairmanship of the G20 in 2023 when it adopted the motto of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" for its Presidency, and made sure that all decisions emanating from the deliberations fully reflected this commitment.

CURRENT STATUS

In recent years, India's "Global South" partnership has matured into a core pillar of its foreign policy. One of the most consequential achievements of India in its G20 Presidency was the inclusion of African Union, a body comprising 54 African countries, as a full-fledged member of the G20. This issue had been hanging fire for many years and it fell to India, with its commitment to the interests of the Global South, to bring it to fruition by evolving the requisite consensus on this important subject.

India has been able to significantly enhance its engagement with the Global South because its economy has grown significantly in recent years. When PM Modi assumed power in 2014, India's economy was the 10th largest in the world. Today it is the 4th largest with prognosis to emerge as the third largest by 2027. Today India is the fastest growing major economy with its GDP growth registering an impressive 8.2% in the last quarter. India is expected to grow from a US$4 trillion economy today to more than US$10 trillion by 2035.

India's increased economic strength has inter alia enhanced its capacity to play a much more active role in global affairs and lend a helping hand in times of need to those in difficulty. During the Covid-19 pandemic, India supplied medicines and vaccines, most of them gratis, to several partners, particularly from the Global South.

India provided medicines to more than 150 countries, and more than 300 million vaccine doses under its Vaccine Maitri (Vaccine Friendship) initiative to more than 100 countries. Because of its economic heft, India could come to the assistance of Sri Lanka to the tune of US$4.5 billion when the latter's coffers were empty in 2022 and to the support of Afghanistan, Maldives etc. with financial support, food supplies and medicines when these countries had their backs to the wall.

This has also enabled India to emerge as the First Responder in times of need and when calamities like earthquakes, floods etc. have struck in its neighbourhood and beyond.

KEY PILLARS OF ENGAGEMENT

India's "Global South Partnership" today is defined by four distinct areas of cooperation:

A. DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE (DPI) & "THE INDIA STACK"

India has moved from domestic achievements to global outreach.

- **Fintech Diplomacy:** UPI (Unified Payments Interface) is now operational or in pilot stages across several Global South nations, including Namibia, Sri Lanka, and parts of Southeast Asia.
- **Social Impact Fund:** India's **$25 million** commitment to a Social Impact Fund helps smaller nations build their own digital identity (Aadhaar-like) and payment systems to promote financial inclusion.

B. HEALTH & PHARMACEUTICAL LEADERSHIP

Reaffirming its title as the "Pharmacy of the World," India has evolved from providing medicines and vaccines in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic to building

HEALTH RESILIENCE.

- **Generic Medicines:** Providing affordable, high-quality generic drugs to nations in Africa and the Caribbean.
- **Regulatory Capacity:** India is now actively training drug regulators in Global South countries to help them establish their own pharmaceutical safety standards.

C. THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT COMPACT

Proposed by Prime Minister Modi in late 2024, this compact focuses on:

- **Trade for Development:** Reducing barriers for Least Developed Countries (LDCs).
- **Concessional Finance:** Offering project-specific grants rather than the "debt-trap" loans often associated with some other major powers

D. CLIMATE JUSTICE & ENERGY TRANSITION

India champions the principle of "Common but Differentiated Responsibilities" (CBDR).

- **International Solar Alliance (ISA):** With 121 member countries, many of which are from the Global South, the ISA underscores India's commitment to addressing climate change and promoting renewable energy.
- **Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment):** India encourages a shift toward sustainable consumption, a narrative that resonates with developing nations that are not the primary cause of climate change but have to endure its worst effects.

CONCLUSION

India's geopolitical dynamics with the Global South have evolved significantly over the years, reflecting its growing economic power, strategic interests, and aspirations to be a major player on the global stage. India's proactive engagement with the Global South underscores its commitment to a multipolar world where developing nations have a significant voice in global affairs.

Through sustained efforts in diplomacy, economic cooperation, and strategic partnerships, India is poised to play a pivotal role in the evolving dynamics of the Global South. As both a leader and a partner, India continues to play a crucial role in shaping the future of the Global South.

Through sustained cooperation, mutual respect, and shared aspirations, India and the Global South can collectively navigate the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Ambassador Ashok Sajjanhar