

Roundtable on India-Africa Relations in a Post-Pandemic World



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Research and Information System
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विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली

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RIS, in collaboration with University of Oslo, organised a Roundtable Discussion on “India-Africa Relations in a Post-Pandemic World” in hybrid mode on 9 December 2021. The Roundtable examined the current state of India’s relations with the African continent in general. Spread across two sessions covering overall foreign policy orientations between the two countries, the programmes specifically focussed on sectoral cooperation in some key areas, including health, IT, renewable energy, capacity building and traditional medicine, apart from development cooperation, infrastructure development and the role of Indian diaspora.

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Inaugural Session

Welcome Remarks:



Professor Sachin Chaturvedi
Director General, RIS

Professor Sachin Chaturvedi

In his welcome remarks, Professor Chaturvedi highlighted the major milestones in India-Africa relations over the years, including some of the noteworthy trends in their development partnership. He emphasised that India is keen to ensure the timely implementation and completion of its development and infrastructure projects. Prime Minister Modi has already taken initiative to effectively monitor the progress of these projects. In order to further strengthening and widening India's development efforts, he suggested the setting up of an India's Development Agency, which will also be helpful in facilitating development cooperation in Africa as well as in other parts of the world. He was of the view that India-Africa partnership is extremely important as New Delhi goes forward with African commitment for AU Agenda 2063 along with UN Agenda 2030 in the light of a new and dynamic that India has been pressing for an inclusive global order. Stressing on this theme, he added that India's developmental partnership with Africa is not confined to one or two countries in the continent. It is spread over the entire continent, covering both English speaking and Francophone regions.

Professor Chaturvedi also noted while it is important to discuss India-Africa partnership at the bilateral level, it is far more important to explore it at the continental level. He said that RIS established the Global Development Centre (GDC) in 2018 for possible replication of India's best developmental practices in the continent as part of mutual learning and sharing of experiences. During the last two years, GDC has tried to correlate India's own development experience with the African countries through a variety of innovative measures, including AADHAR enabled e-payment services, digital health CoWin platform, 'One Health One World' and localization of development since these facets are the key constituents of the new development strategy that India has adopted. Fortunately, he added, India's leadership has laid special focus on adherence to project completion timelines because many of India's key developmental projects abroad were getting unduly delayed due to one reason or the other. Under Prime Minister Modi's guidance all Indian developmental projects are being regularly and closely monitored with the help of e-Pragati digital platform, particularly with this engagement

Remarks:



Professor Dan Banik
University of Oslo, Norway

Professor Dan Banik

In his remarks, Professor Banik highlighted the changes in India's policy towards Africa. He said that there are more high profile visits to the continent by Indian leaders in recent times. Defence cooperation between India and Africa is also evolving. He argued that there is an element of shift from idealism to pragmatism in the Indian foreign policy. He said that that the relationship in many ways has progressed. Underlining the need for link between foreign policy and domestic policy, not just in India, but also in general, he sought to establish a linkage between foreign policy and economic development. However, he noted that the linkage between foreign policy and domestic policy is weak in most countries. In terms of economic development, he felt, it is much better established that a country that is doing well economically will obviously have much more power, much more influence. That is why, he added, there is now considerable talk about the Indian model of development. India can be distinguished from China in many ways. One would be in relation to how India views the world. He also talked about the role of India as a cosmopolitan centre, its civilizational past, its rich cultural heritage, its openness to other cultures, which in many ways, has placed an additional responsibility, perhaps some would say on India to play a greater global role. Related to this, he added, is India's inspirational role of a normative power. That it is about India using its authority and influence to shape international relations, including what is considered to be acceptable behaviour in international relations. Related to this is, he felt, some would say the tension between aspiration, ambition, power and capability. However, Professor Banik opined that it is a matter of academic research.

He further noted that India has a historical footprint on the continent for a long time. For many years, it was considered that the Indian diaspora has played the important role in this regard. However, recent research, he added, shows that the Indian diaspora has not played the kind of role that it should have. Now India has stepped up. In addition to high profile political visits to the continent, new diplomatic Missions are being opened to newer parts of the continent that have traditionally not had a large Indian diaspora. The major point is that one can actually build on numerous existing efforts that India has had. So traditionally, he felt, one could say there has been a division of labour between China, the US, EU, on the one hand, and India on the other. China has been in the infrastructure business for a long time, the EU has just launched the Global Gateway programme, and the US is talking about 'Build Back

Better World.’ But both of these are being sold as a way of countering China, not necessarily to build infrastructure. Therefore, both of these initiatives are suffering from a lack of credibility in Africa. But India has been highlighting its IT, health, and capacity building aspects. Its capacity building dimension has a long historical connect with people of Africa. How India could, as China is doing increasingly, promote not just soft power, or smart power, but also relational power. It is about facilitating greater exchanges at the people to people level, not just with students, but with others, including judges, journalists and leaders.

Professor Banik also stated that the reputation of India of being the pharmacy of the world is of enormous importance, given the pandemic and the situation. There is extreme dissatisfaction in the continent, because of the IP waiver issue. Rich countries are being accused, rightly so, of being selfish, of thinking about the booster dose, while African countries do not really have access to vaccines, that is going to be crucial.

The Pan African e-network was providing telemedicine and tele-education in the continent in the pre-internet friendly age. The extent to which these have been rechristened and rebranded and can be scaled up is going to be extremely significant because there is a huge demand and hunger for education. There is also need for telemedicine. The stars are aligned for India to reap the benefits of being the first mover on these issues starting from 2009. The Pan African e-network is was such a brilliant idea, the extent to which it can be followed up in a pandemic and a post-pandemic phase is going to be crucial.

Special Remarks:

Mr Dammu Ravi



Mr Dammu Ravi
*Secretary (ER), Ministry of
External Affairs, Government
of India*

Mr Dammu Ravi noted that cooperation with Africa is always important for India. Underlining India’s historical relations with Africa, Mr Ravi said that currently New Delhi is widening its cooperation in health, renewable and IT- financial technology sectors. Apart from COVID vaccines, India provided medical assistance to African nations and is also ready to support in the future as well. He opined that there is also scope for deepening the India’s relations with Africa in telemedicine. However, he added, trade is not up to mark with Africa. Today, he felt, Africa wants to make manufactured goods not just only export the raw materials. Therefore, India would like to set up manufacturing zones there with the support of African nations. India is exploring prospects for triangular cooperation with France and Britain in Africa, he added.

Underlining government’s commitment to deepen this relationship, Mr Ravi also agreed that India and Africa still continue to face common

challenges and have development aspirations, which calls for greater cooperation. He stressed that South-South Cooperation (SSC) is a cooperation underpinned by solidarity while overseas development assistance from around the world decreases, it is important that the developing countries cooperate among themselves, share amongst themselves the resources, technologies and capacities. He also explained that though SSC has been in existence for many decades but its branding has never been done appropriately. He observed that SSC is part of the Indian ethos. India has never focused on its branding. That is why people around the world are not appropriately aware India's development works in Africa.

Mr Ravi highlighted the deep development commitment of India through capacity building projects and grants on which almost INR 30 billion has been spent by India. Out of this a significant part has been spent by India in Africa. He also stated that India is improving efficiency and doing the projects in a manner that the recipient country would like to see them as icons of growth and India-Africa cooperation, contributing to the economic development of those countries. He said that India also believes in sharing prosperity, which is essential for both regional as well as global peace and stability. During the COVID pandemic, the world has witnessed enormous crisis of a different kind, where cooperation amongst nations become essential as well as imperative. The way to address similar unprecedented challenges in future, he added, is to enhance the architect of cooperation because COVID pandemic like situations do not respect national boundaries.

Thinking about what India and Africa can do together in post-COVID world, he said that there are also opportunities despite several challenges. First, the health care is going to be a top priority area for nations. Within health care, there is great opportunity for both sides ranging from the supply of medicines, medical equipment to setting up of hospitals, nursing institutes and diagnostic centres. He felt that using technology, perhaps telemedicine concepts, become increasingly important. He argued that the time has come to think differently, perhaps, by starting manufacturing a portion of it in African countries. Secondly, digital technologies are bringing the world closer by shrinking spaces. He cited the examples of AADHAR, fintech and e-commerce which can provide huge potential for cooperation between India and Africa with the help of Indian Missions abroad. Considering the importance of renewable energy in times of climate change, Mr Ravi referred to the common commitments of India and Africa at COP26 to move away from fossil fuels to renewable sector. He said that through development partnership initiative, India has already done crucial development work in a small scale in several African countries, which

should be scaled up. The International Solar Alliance is a very good platform in this regard and he added that many African countries have signed on to it

In the field of education, he said, with increasing pace of internet in the continent, it should be possible to have virtual classrooms, and called upon private and public sector firms to come together to reach out to African students to take part in a wide range of educational programmes, including engineering courses, medical courses or agricultural experts complementing relevant institutions to make future generations in Africa fully employable.

Mr Ravi emphasized on greater efficiency in completion of identified projects, which reduce delays in infrastructure projects in Africa because time loss is a big loss. He saw a great opportunity for public-private-partnerships in this field through innovative financing for giving value to both Indian participants as well as the African countries in terms of employment generation and economic activity. Referring to enormous potential for greater trade between India and Africa, he observed that despite Duty Free Tariff Free Scheme, preferential market access given by India in accordance with Hong Kong Ministerial commitment of 2008 has not really yielded enough result in terms of African exports to India.

In order to support Africa's aspirations and efforts for manufacturing goods for export to other countries, including India which provides a large market, he felt that time has come to set up manufacturing zones in Africa itself rather than just sending goods, finished or semi-finished goods directly from India to Africa. He felt that Indian partners should help African partners in setting up manufacturing zones with the support of African countries with grant of special facilities in these special zones for production of products for Africa and for export outside the continent.

Mr Ravi informed that there would be restructuring of India-Africa development partnership or reorientation. The government cannot do everything. It has to look at partners, both Indian partners, and also international partners. Many countries, for example, UK, France, Japan, are looking at trilateral cooperation, to be able to do projects in Africa by synergizing the strengths of countries

In response to a question, he said that Japan is very keen to do with India trilateral cooperation projects. Similarly, UK, France, Germany and the Netherlands have also shown interest in this regard. India is already doing this with US. He said that now India has developed the required capacity and skills, which can be complemented by financial

and logistical support from industrialized countries to promote trilateral cooperation in Africa. He said that a good beginning in this regard has already been made in a small way. He suggested building a corpus fund, which can be used for financing these small projects. These need not necessarily be capital intensive projects. Tele-education is one of those models and telemedicine is another model, diagnostics centres, dentist centre. These are all low budgets and can be easily carried out over a period of time. He also cited the example of International Solar Alliance under which more commercially oriented energy producing activities could be undertaken under trilateral cooperation with higher benchmarks and efficiency levels.

He also referred to the huge potential in the field of traditional medicines, including the increasing popularity of Ayush globally. He advised the firms to reach out to interested partners with the help of Indian Missions abroad and explore the emerging market. However, a greater acceptability of Ayush products will take some time. The initial experience of COVID has shown there is far more potential in this sector. He also referred to constraints on account of clinical trials and public perception about Ayush products. He felt that thing would improve with greater quality controls and evidence based studies in support of such products.

Mr Ravi said that it is fashionable now to talk about medical tourism as it brings in a lot of revenues. However, he said, there is an urgent need to create capacity in Africa itself to deal with diseases. Bringing of patients to India for medical treatment is a temporary arrangement. In this regard, he suggested medical issues of the primary and tertiary care levels should be handled locally itself to the extent possible.

He said that India was ready to partner with Africa to the extent possible for mutually beneficial cooperation as true independence comes from economic freedom and self-reliance. India would be ready to share its knowledge, experience and expertise by enhancing its presence in critical areas such as IT, health, education, etc. The government can act as a key facilitator on this front. He suggested thinking to create exclusive economic zone to attract greater investment and engagement from interested partners. He also felt that there is massive scope for engagement of MSMEs in these areas, including India's flagship programme Har Ghar Jal, which could be taken to different parts of Africa as one of the most successful developmental practices of India.

Session 1: Overall Foreign Policy of India and Africa

The session was co-chaired Ambassador Vinod Kumar, formerly Ambassador of India to Uzbekistan and High Commissioner to Fiji and Professor Anuradha M. Chenoy, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.



Ambassador Vinod Kumar
formerly Ambassador of India to Uzbekistan and High Commissioner to Fiji

Ambassador Vinod Kumar

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Vinod Kumar said that the basic theme of India's partnership with Africa can be summed up as what the Prime Minister Modi often says 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas.' He further stated that India's development partnership with Africa probably follows that framework and in its true sense is guided by the requirements of partner countries. Over the past decades, and particularly over the past few years, India had worked collaboratively in enhancing the techno-economic capacity and skills among other things in Africa. Some of the initiatives, which have been taken in India-Africa partnership served as a model for New Delhi's development collaboration with other regions. He also referred to the Pan African e-network, which was replicated in other regions subsequently, particularly in the area of healthcare and education. He also cited the example of training of elderly poor women for using solar equipment and technology, which was subsequently replicated in the Pacific and other parts of the world. The ideas of e-VidyaBharti and e-Arogya Bharti have also been very useful, he added.

Underlining the threats of climate change, Ambassador Kumar argued that it is not just the SIDS, the coastal areas, but almost entire continent is already being affected. Therefore, more focus on adaptation and climate finance is required. The India-Africa Forum Summits as well as the group of like-minded developing countries have been raising this issue. The primary focus should be on people to people engagement in Africa and other parts of the world.



Professor Ajay Dubey
Chair, African Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Professor Ajay Dubey

Professor Dubey argued that India should de-continentalise its approach to Africa. Contesting the popular and old narrative on India-Africa relations, he noted that the continental approach to Africa reveals little and hides too many things within that. That, he felt, is a major bottleneck in terms of India's policy formulation. For example, the Francophone Africa is an entirely different area to engage with. The

colonial pact that exists within the Francophone region shows exclusive and effective control that France has within the region. In terms of monetary, banking and commercial systems, it is far different from Anglophone and Lusophone Africa. He, therefore, suggested that India should work towards decontinentlaizaiton of its approach in Africa

He also suggested that India should expand the number of countries in its economic engagement since 90 per cent of India-Africa trade is confined to around 10 to 11 countries, which is a very small in number against the overall presence of more than 50 countries in the continent. Since most of the African countries are highly suspicious of engaging with countries with colonial baggage like Japan, France, the UK and Nordic countries, India should be careful in its engagement with the African countries in terms of triangular cooperation

Suggesting a fresh look at LoCs being offered by India to its African partners, he called for their comprehensive renew in terms of overall impact in the partner countries. He also called for independent assessment of India's funded projects in Africa which would provide valuable feedback to the government and result in their accelerated and impactful completion.

He also underlined the importance of supporting think tanks and academics to enhance their knowledge of the continent in terms of its culture, languages and socio-economic connect that would be extremely valuable for the foreign policy making. He also emphasised the need for sensitizing the public in general about the importance of Africa for India as part of public diplomacy for forging closer linkages with the continent.



Mr Shyam Parande
*Secretary, SWEA
International*

Mr Shyam Parande

Mr Parande highlighted the contribution of Indian diaspora in social development of Africa and discussed commonalities of culture between India and Africa. For developing greater understanding language, cultures and commonalities, he suggested that more research work should be done. Sharing some experiences of Indian daispora in Africa, he added that they went with meagre balances and they became rich there due to their hard work. They are richer than most of the local communities. The positive side is that they are businessmen and industrialists, who may be earning lots of money and have prospered in those countries. They are also connected with their mother country, and also equally attached to the communities.

Further, highlighting cultural similarities between India and Africa, he said that arts similar to Warli from Western Maharashtra have been

found in African countries. Similar is the case of Tribal performances, the dancers in Western coast of India. They dance all through the night. Similar postures, similar expressions, similar make-ups and similar dresses, colourful dresses are found in Africa. Developing greater understanding in the cultures or the diversity of Africa, which match the diversity of India, Mr Parande felt that like Indians, African also value diversity and live in diversity like Indians do. Thus, there should be more interactions and dialogues at the community levels. Educational exchange is an important component of India-Africa cooperation and many of the young students have come to India through MEA scholarships, or ICCR scholarships. These students, he felt, have positive opinion about the Indian education system.



Dr Ruchita Beri
Senior Research Associate,
MP-IDSA

Dr Ruchita Beri

Highlighting new changes in Indian foreign policy towards Africa, Dr Beri discussed the Prime Minister Modi's policy towards Africa. She noted that agriculture, renewable energy, international solar alliance, etc. are the major areas of India-Africa cooperation. Many African nations are in long sunshine zone and are also energy deficient countries. To realise the potential, they should look for innovative financing. There should be greater collaboration in research & development. She noted that civil society organizations have also potential to contribute in strengthening development partnership. Of the 20 top fastest growing economies in the world that the IMF suggested in 2020, five of them were from Africa. Therefore, she argued African economic potential also contributed in shaping India's Africa policy. During his visit to Uganda, Prime Minister Modi announced the 10 guiding principles of India-Africa engagements. India's Africa engagement will be driven by the African priorities, and would focus on developing local capacities. She pointed that the trends are evident by the increase in the high level visits to African countries. There have been several visits at the level of Prime Minister, President and Vice President levels to the African countries. Some of these visits have taken place after a gap of 32 years. Similarly, interactions have also increased at the Pan Africa level through the India-Africa forum Summit. There is also interaction with the regional organizations like SADC in Southern Africa, the ECOWAS and Invest Africa and other regional organization.

Development partnership is the main pillar of India-Africa cooperation and 40 per cent of India's LoCs that India has given to developing countries go to the African region. In terms of sectoral cooperation, Dr Beri stated that agriculture is a priority for African countries. The African Union has developed a policy which would deal

with enhancing agricultural productivity in the continent. India has also identified agriculture as an important area. Renewable energy, she felt, is again an important area and suggested for cooperation between India and Africa. While in past the cooperation has been mainly in the hydrocarbon sector, and given the fact that India is an energy deficit country, Africa has been able to provide India with support in terms of diminishing this gap, and Nigeria is one of the biggest supporter in that context. India's policy moving towards cleaner energy fuels is important. The International Solar Alliance has brought in a number of African countries.

The COVID pandemic has brought light to the importance of health care. During the pandemic, India joined hands with the African countries in trying to reduce the inequity in the access of medicines and vaccine shows the importance of cooperation among the Global South. In trying to reduce this inequity that exists in the world towards access to either the vaccines or medicines, India should strive to continue to work together with the African countries in various fora. Dr Beri noted that there are several other areas like Blue Economy, space technology, and others, which could be important in terms of innovative financing. Financing of development projects are crucial. LoCs were a good tool of financing development projects. Newer tools should be identified. However, she also suggested that India should move toward collaborative research and development in various fields such as IT, health or others.



Professor Milindo Chakrabarti
Visiting Fellow, RIS

Professor Milindo Chakrabarti

Professor Chakrabarti said that Africa is not a monolith. India being one of the forerunners in carrying out the flag of SSC cannot afford to ignore the pluralities of the African continent. In this context, he also suggested that time has come to develop a new term 'facilitating power.' India has got the most important and unenviable role to take up the facilitating role power in helping maintain the plurality in Africa and add to its strengths in future.

He said that there are eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa. Countries are with multiple memberships or more than one such RECs. These memberships are being guided by various interests including political, economic and social. He explained that all these RECs except the Arab Maghrib Union are very much active even today and importantly, many of them were set up in the 1960s. They are still active and play active roles in terms of their contribution in integrating some of the countries within their framework. There are variations

and pluralities in the RECs, but the objective of these different RECs was to create a larger space for the people to move around as well as resources to be available in a free manner.

He noted that it is important to see SADC is for regional integration and sustainable development that is their objective. So, the Africa regional integration Index report 2019 developed a very interesting measure of regional integration on five dimensions. There were free movement of people, infrastructural, integration, macro-economic integration, production integration and trade integration. Number one, all these eight RECs are more integrated than the whole of Africa itself. Compared to Africa, their scores are much higher. It means they have integrated much better within themselves than with Africa, because not much of the efforts were there to integrate Africa as a whole.

Concluding Remarks:

Professor Anuradha Chenoy



Professor Anuradha Chenoy
Formerly Professor, JNU

In her concluding remarks, Professor Chenoy noted that argument for moving on from soft power to people to people power can be related to relational power and transactional power, etc. She argued that soft power, as it is seen with the experience of COVID-pandemic and climate change, is actually as important as hard power. But the strategists continue to believe that military force is hard power and everything else does not have to be prioritized. They have been proved wrong repeatedly, she added.

Secondly, she said that decontinentalisation is important, not just because of Francophone, Lusophone, Anglophone, etc. but also because what happens with continentalisation is stereotype on Africa. She further said that the decontinentalisation is to not only be specific to see the specificities of different African regions, countries, cultures, etc. but developing also for our own knowledge paradigms, which are a continuity of the paradigm of anti-colonialism. So they have to be anti-racist and anti-hegemonic. As it is said in the guiding principles of India's Africa policy, as laid down by the Prime Minister, along with local cultures, local capacities and local communities have to be brought into the picture and the pluralities and diversities. If there is no clear understanding of Africa, then other policies of engagement, whether economic or political engagement, will really fall through, Professor Chenoy cautioned.

Further, Indian development assistance is a key to India's relations with Africa. RIS has been keen to develop a concrete policy. She also

argued that there should be an independent assessment, of these projects, as opposed to assessment from the project managers. She suggested that India's branding can be adequate if we project Indian development assistance through certain apps. India is opposed to conditionalities. It is already said about what the recipient wants and we give, but India also supports marginalized communities. We must help women in Africa. It will be a brand in itself. She also agreed that there should be a greater connect, even though there has been an attempt to connect with diasporas and to engage local communities along with the diaspora for deepening partnerships as well as developing trilateral partnerships.

Session 2: India-Africa Technology and Health Partnership

The Session 2 was chaired by Mr. Puneet Roy Kundal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, GoI.

Chair for the Session:

Mr Puneet Roy Kundal



Mr Puneet Roy Kundal
Joint Secretary, (East and Southern Africa Division), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

In his opening remarks, Mr Kundal said that Africa is a huge continent and has a thriving economy. Further describing the continent, he said that right from Cape Agulhas in South Africa to Cape Angela in Tunisia, which is the North-South, around 9000 km and 54 countries, comprise the continent of Africa. India and Africa are really old civilizations, which are connected by maritime links. India's partnership with Africa is truly comprehensive, multidimensional and involves a wide spectrum of activities. The guiding principles of India's partnership were laid very clearly by Prime Minister Modi, in his speech to the Ugandan Parliament in 2018 where he said that Africa will be at the top of our priorities. We will continue to intensify and deepen our engagement with Africa. As we have shown, it will be sustained and regular.

In the field of health, Mr Kundal envisaged that we would harness India's expertise. India's experience with the digital revolution may support Africa's development, improve delivery of public services, extend education and health, spread digital literacy, expand financial inclusion and mainstream the marginalized. In the recent past, especially during the COVID pandemic, he added, India has provided medicines to 33 countries, valued at over INR 40 crore. India has not hesitated to supply vaccines to the best of its ability.

Mr Kundal also referred to the forward looking MoU signed between the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in March 2019, which deals with Africa on a pan continental scale in terms of development, capacity building, and extending assistance in the field of health. India has also gifted ambulances, for example, to several African countries and also held health camps for artificial limbs, such as Jaipur foot, as well as fighting against Ebola virus. India is also upgrading the health infrastructure of several countries such as the ENT Hospital and a renal transplant unit in Mauritius. India is discussing with South Sudan for the establishment of a psychiatric hospital and building health clinics in Zambia. While highlighting the government efforts, he also mentioned that the entire Indian private sector has a huge presence all across the African continent, such as medical chains under Apollo and Primus hospitals.

One element that has really gained traction in India's understanding is that relations between India and any other entity should not only be seen from the prism of bilateral or multilateral relationship at the government level as Indian private sector has also been playing an extremely important role in it. The health sector also needs to be seen, he added, from India's perspective in a larger framework in terms of people's well-being. There is also associated aspect of nutrition, cleanliness and environmental pollution. India has really assisted several countries in Africa on all these parameters. In fact, India has also encouraged job creation in Africa through setting up entrepreneurship development institutions through training of people. The centres of geo informatics and rural development in Madagascar and Niger are typical examples. India-Africa Cooperation in health is to be seen holistically. The COVID-19 also really brought the focus on India as the world's largest producer of vaccines. It also put focus on India as the pharmacy of the world.

Mr Kundal also discussed about implementation of e-Vidyabharathi and e-Arogyabharati, which is a step forward from Pan African network. The idea is to provide telemedicine to countries in Africa. As of now, 19 countries from Africa are on board to make use of this. About 430 doctors and paramedics have taken trainings in various medical fields in India since 2015. These trainings did not stop even during the peak of the COVID pandemic. India has just shifted ITEC to E-ITEC. Whole lot of training programmes was conducted on that platform. He also said that India's LoCs are based on the felt requirements of the countries. India does not believe in predatory financing. Uganda learnt it the hard way recently, when their airport was about to be seized. Similarly, Tanzania, Djibouti and other also learnt it the hard

way. On the issue of health, there were the grim pictures of people dying of HIV-AIDS. Earlier values of medicines from 10 to \$15,000 per annum, Cipla brought down to \$350 per annum, less than \$1 a day for generic medicines. The price was even further jolted down to \$75 per year. Mylan and another company, Aurobindo came up with cheaper drugs. This is the real contribution to Africa.

The WHO buys 50 per cent of its generic medicines for ARV's from India. India has been pivotal in fighting meningitis in large parts of Africa; meningitis really does not exist anymore. India is in the process of approaching African countries to recognize the Indian Pharmacopoeia. Drugs are manufactured or accepted in many of the African countries as per the French or the USFDA, or the Japanese Pharmacopoeia. He said that India has been taking up with the African countries that Indian Pharmacopoeia is as good as any other and the end result is the same; a paracetamol is a paracetamol. India has received positive consideration from several African countries in this respect. India's pharmaceutical products have started to dominate its trade with the African countries.



Dr Sulakshana Jain
*Scientist 'E', Department of Science
and Technology, Government of
India*

Dr Sulakshana Jain

Dr Sulakshana Jain stated that the Department of Science and Technology (DST) is working with Africa in many bilateral and multilateral projects for capacity building in all the subjects of science, engineering, medical and agriculture in Africa. Further elaborating cooperation with Africa in areas of science & technology, Dr Jain said that India is cooperating to strengthen institutes involved in health, medicine, pharmaceuticals, etc. Additionally, DST is also working on the intellectual property as well as the technology development network. These are the main forms of the India-Africa Forum Summit.

Regarding, the fellowship and the training programmes, Dr Jain said that they are all based on the feedback mechanism, continuous consultations with the people, scientists and industry experts because areas of science & technology are quite diverse. Another aspect is the strengthening of the key African institutions. She also observed that there was more emphasis or taking this technology driven things to the people not only in India, as well as in Africa. Underlining the example of India-Rwanda Innovation Growth Programme, she said that Indian technologies have been identified as suitable to Africa's needs, and are bring connected them with the African entrepreneurs. There are lot of efforts to conduct capacity building and mentoring workshops

for these African entrepreneurs. About 24 Indian technologies were shortlisted that best responded to the Rwandan needs. Matchmaking about 11 business engagements were signed that include B2B, B2G, G2G at all levels. These technologies are in the area of agriculture, food processing, leather and renewable energy, which will have direct social impact. Similarly, the takeaway from this, the success of this India-Rwanda programme, many countries such as Zambia, South Africa have approached DST for developing similar kinds of programmes.

With support of the World Bank, India has been assisting capacity building of African institutions. The World Bank has identified some of the Centres of Excellences in Africa based on their capabilities. India is one of the first few countries to have collaborated with these centres as a knowledge provider. India has made a consortium of Indian institutions, particularly the key IITs, and one or two national laboratories which work as knowledge providers. The key research areas are material science and fuel energy, infrastructure, environment, ICT, railways. India is getting the request from other centers also to partner with them.

India could get around 500 scientists and students from different parts of Africa since 2013 covering around 40 countries. This programme, she noted has been useful in connecting scientists from different countries. India should support joint research projects for co-creation of knowledge. India is also working to develop more collaboration for facilitating innovation and technology transfer programmes. New Delhi also intends to develop some GIS enabled tools for informed policymaking in Africa, she added.



Mr Aviral Gupta
OSD, National Health Authority

Mr Aviral Gupta

Being more of a technical expert, Mr Aviral Gupta discussed the different health technologies, the digital public goods and how to collaborate with the various African nations on these health technologies because the way India is approaching technology is not that of copying solutions which have been made in the West. More emphasis should be on understanding the issues that concern our society and help in finding indigenous solutions such as AADHAAR, eKYC AADHAAR enabled payment services, direct benefit transfer, etc.

Based on the success of these various digital public goods, Mr Gupta informed that the platform of COWIN was created for ensuring an equitable and inclusive administration of vaccinations. There is a multilingual interface for multiple modes of registration so that

accessibility to all can be enabled. The most beautiful aspect of COWIN is that it enables to remove information asymmetry. It kept all the stakeholders aligned and provided information across states to private, government entities and citizens.

The health landscape has been evolving rapidly. COWIN was highly dynamic as well as scalable because the task of administering vaccinations for a billion plus people was not going to be easy, especially keeping a track of all the vaccines which were deployed. Finally, he noted that the last aspect is the feedback. The analysis is also important to track the adverse effects of immunization, if any. COWIN helps to track real time data, so that the vaccine administration policies could be built in a data driven manner.



Dr Priyadarshi Dash
Associate Professor, RIS

Dr Priyadarshi Dash

Fintech is an exciting area of technological innovation, Dr Das said it brings the technological innovations to finance domain and packages services in a way which reduces costs and makes it efficient in terms of delivery. It tries to reach the unbanked segments, which was not possible using the traditional financial infrastructure. The number of e-services has grown from 2400 to roughly 3800, registering 56 percent growth in six years. Dr Das gave several examples such as Umang app that provides options to choose the vaccines; 860 plus services are offered there, which are user friendly. Mobile and Internet connections are growing every day in a geometric fashion. Digilocker is one of the initiatives launched by MeitY as part of the Digital India programme. AADHAAR is a transformative digital identity platform globally. This is the biggest digital public good that India can offer to any other country in the world. During COVID crisis, transfers were made seamlessly to millions of farmers and daily wage workers.

Considering immense potential of digitalization in Africa, Dr Das argued that it is land of opportunity and exploration. Africa is the leading region as far as mobile money transaction per capita mobile transactions is concerned. He also said that mobile money services are growing at a very rapid pace. But fintech landscape is still evolving. Foreign investors are eyeing at Africa for the investments. In India, there are so many stories of fintech start-ups growing exponentially. Growth in African fintech start-up is 17.3 per cent. Penetration of fintech is gradually shifting to other areas like Investec, block chain based services, digital lending, but the payment of remittances is actually empowering the ordinary people.

Dr Das also attempted to analyze the fintech for the larger developmental aspirations to meet. Post AfCFTA, pan Africa trade integration and Africa financial integration will follow sooner or later. Financial integration is not necessarily in terms of the capital market integration, but for ensuring people to be part of the formal financial system to benefit from what happening in various domains. He also suggested India and some African countries or African organization like AU or AfCFTA Secretariat should also explore possibilities for greater cooperation in areas of fintech.



Dr. G. Geetha Krishnan
Technical Officer, WHO

Dr G. Geetha Krishnan

Dr. Krishnan discussed the importance of traditional medicine and its practices in African continent. He added that South Africa, Mauritius, Ethiopia and Tanzania have strong health systems based on traditional medicine systems. Although each country has a different approach, most of it is based on herbal medicine. He said that World Health Organization (WHO) has done a lot of work on herbal medicine by creating standards and quality assurance programmes for manufacturing. Some kind of guidance on appropriate marketing processes, creating information for consumers to accept traditional medicine, and safe and effective use of these medicines have also been given. The WHO has been working in these areas for the past 20-25 years. It has had the maximum effect in Africa because many of the countries in Africa really refer to the WHO benchmark documents in these areas, especially good manufacturing and agricultural practices, etc.

During the COVID pandemic period, the consortium of African countries had come together with WHO regional office and created a programme or a protocol for developing herbal African medicines for COVID treatment. A well-received document had come out of from the regional office, Dr Krishnan noted. This also offered a lot of opportunity for Ayush manufacturing industry as well as a service industry because the health systems Africa is just beginning to absorb different varieties of things.

As an expert of traditional medicines, he felt that the flora and fauna of Africa are quite suitable, and quite effectively available for Ayush manufacturing services. A good opportunity exists to set up joint collaborative programmes or manufacturing programmes in Africa because the community within different African regions are just waiting for traditional medicine. They have a huge belief in traditional medicine. He shared his experiences of Ethiopia, where people were referring to

Ayurveda and connecting the Ayurvedic herbs and the African herbs, and explaining how they function. Emphasizing on India-Africa cooperation, Dr Krishnan stressed Africa needs the experience and knowledge from India and WHO. Therefore, collaborative agreements and joint ventures in areas of traditional medicines should be explored.

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Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) is a New Delhi-based autonomous policy research institute that specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. RIS is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues.

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