

## **SPEECH OF HON'BLE HRM FOR INDIA-U.S. DIALOGUE OPENING PLENARY SESSION**

<b>Date</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> June 2013</b>
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**Excellency John Kerry, US Secretary of State; Under Secretary Ms. Tara Sonenshine and Ms. Martha Kanter, Ms. Nirupama Rao, India's Ambassador to US, Ms. Nancy J. Powell, US Ambassador to India, Mr. Sam Pitroda, Adviser to PM on Public Information, Infrastructure and Innovations, Mr. Ashok Thakur, Secretary (Higher Education), distinguished guests and participants, our friends from the press and media.**

I am pleased to welcome you and to thank you all for being here today, for the third consecutive education dialogue between India and the United States of America.

Earlier today, I had a brief but a very fruitful meeting with Secretary Kerry and I am happy to say that not only do we share our thoughts on cooperation in higher education and skill building, but also share a common association with Boston, Massachusetts where I had worked as a young graduate. Like many of the distinguished academics present here, I too have had the opportunity to study and work in the United States and I do believe that between the combination of the defining "work ethic" of America and the Indian concept of "Dharma" (which signifies being true to one's responsibilities), there is immense scope for a meaningful collaboration between our two nations to realize our true potential for knowledge creation and innovation. I would like to recite the words of the great statesman Benjamin Franklin who said "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest".

President Obama and our Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh have rightly described the relationship between India and the US as the 'defining partnership' of the 21st century. 'Education and knowledge' is a key pillar of the India U.S. strategic partnership. The partnership offers a huge opportunity to use and share the experience and best practices in the development of institutions of higher learning and research, as also building the capacity of global skill-sets to our mutual advantage.

Swami Vivekananda, whose 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary is being celebrated in India this year, had participated in the Parliament of World Religions organized at Chicago way back in 1893, had given the World his message of tolerance and universal acceptance. The message is even more relevant to us in these turbulent times and a fast changing world. Our two democracies, the oldest democracy and the largest democracy with our inherent value systems, can certainly play a stabilizing role for a better world.

Post-independence, our first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru realized that in order to keep pace with the ever changing world of Science and Technology, it was necessary to collaborate closely with the outside world. The Kanpur Indo-American Program (1962-1972) at IIT-Kanpur was a stride in this direction. Today the IIT Kanpur stands as a landmark institution representing the collaboration between United States and India. In fact, Indian Americans who are products of our different institutions have immensely contributed to the national development of both our countries and have provided a strong culture of innovation.

In recent years, both our countries have built up a considerable portfolio of collaborative endeavours, in diverse areas such as research and development, exchange

of students and faculty, institutional linkages, and skill development. The pace of co-operation has significantly accelerated after the India-US Higher Education Summit, and the Higher Education Dialogue, held in October, 2011 and June, 2012, respectively, in Washington DC. The synergy that we are working towards is best reflected in Secretary Kerry's words from the other day when he had said '*ekaurekgyarehhotehain*'.

Allow me to share with you our vision to transform our educational institutions into hubs of knowledge creation and promoters of innovation as to also be able to provide opportunities to our youth for their skill development and employment. During the XII Five Year Plan 2012-2017, we intend to achieve an additional enrolment capacity of 10 million students in higher education including 1 million in open and distance learning so as to raise the country's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education from 18.1% at present to 25.2% by 2017 and to reach the target of 30% GER by 2020. The skill development and vocational education should be, in my view, an integral part of our education system and the inclusive role of business and industry in this effort would be of great relevance.

Our late Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi envisioned leading India into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and he believed in leveraging on the transformational power of Technology. Given our demographic make-up and large population, technology enabled education, including emerging technologies like MOOCs (massive open online courses); offer us a great opportunity to reach out to and empower large numbers. To give you a glimpse of the challenges before us, we have more than 229 million students in our 1.41 million schools and every year we have almost 17 million students transiting from grade VIII to grade IX who must be provided adequate opportunities of a productive secondary school education and skills in order to realize India's true "Demographic Dividend". Our Prime Minister has set a target of skilling 500 million youth by the year 2022. In all these endeavours, technology can play a very enabling role. We have made a beginning with our National Knowledge Network and National Mission on Education through ICT, which is a one billion dollar project. More than 400 of our universities and 18,000 colleges are now connected. There is an imminent need to further leverage on ICT for more effective dissemination of knowledge and learning.

It is in this context of knowledge creation, skill development and the use of technology that the India-U.S. co-operation in higher education signals a 'win-win' opportunity for both sides, by matching mutual strengths and concerns and creating avenues for progress. I would like to flag some of the issues that I would like to be taken up for widening our cooperation for an outcome based approach:

- i. A 'roadmap' for collaboration covering specific areas, viz., promoting institution to institution linkages; deepening co-operation in Research & Development (R&D); encouraging faculty exchanges and development of junior faculty and teachers; promoting a two-way student exchange; leveraging the U.S. experience and resources for skill creation and up-gradation in India; and collaborating in open online education such as MOOCs.
- ii. A strategy for greater collaboration for research in grand challenge areas to tackle developmental challenges so as to find practical and cost effective solutions for various problems facing not only our two countries but also other parts of the globe.
- iii. Help transform our educational institutions into engines of economic growth through strengthening innovation and entrepreneurship. As you are aware, our Government has declared this decade to be a decade of innovation and I am glad

that Mr. Sam Pitroda, Adviser to PM on Innovation is here who may like to carry this forward during the working sessions.

As I had said earlier, I visualize skill development to be an integral part of our education system. Based on the US experience of Community Colleges, we have embarked to develop community colleges across the length and breadth of the country. I appreciate the enthusiastic participation of a very strong US team led by Under Secretary Tara Sonenshine in International Seminar on community Colleges in February, 2013 which has helped crystallize our strategy for institutionalizing the Community Colleges in India. We would like to depute teams of experts to community colleges in the U.S. and also would like the institution level cooperation for capacity development support.

In my view, Industry-Academia engagements would play a key role to take forward the initiatives in research, technology development and skill building. Our industry partner organizations like FICCI, CII, ASSOCHAM, USIBC and industries have been participating since the First Summit in 2011 and we would like to scale up these engagements at a faster pace where the US experience would be very helpful to us.

With this long list on the menu, I am sure both sides would have very fruitful deliberations later during the day in the working sessions for magnification of these areas and other possible avenues of collaboration. I am glad to note that the decisions which were taken in the previous dialogues have all been carried forward and have fructified into concrete results in the form of the Obama-Singh Knowledge Initiative, the Raman Fellowships, Cooperation in Community Colleges, MOOCS, Cyber Systems and the Connect India Program, to name a few.

Before I conclude, let me congratulate the signatories of the different MoUs and once again take the opportunity to express my deep appreciation and thanks to his Excellency, Secretary John Kerry and his team for making it convenient to travel to India and participate in the today's dialogue, which I am sure will be yet another significant milestone in the Higher Education collaboration between our two countries.

I now invite Excellency, Secretary John Kerry to deliver his address.

**Thank You**