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The Big Picture: India-Africa Partnership

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- Africa is the world's **second largest continent** both in terms of **land and population** with 54 countries which account for **almost 15% of the world's human population**.
- India and Africa have a long and rich history of interactions marked by cultural, economic and political exchanges based on the principle of **South-South Cooperation**.
- In recent years, a number of steps have been taken to further and strengthen these relations.

South-South Cooperation

- It is a broad **framework of collaboration** among the countries of the southern hemisphere in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains.
- Involving two or more developing countries, it can take place on a **bilateral, regional, intraregional or interregional** basis.
- The **United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)** was established in **1974** to promote, coordinate and support South-South cooperation globally and within the UN system.

At **National Conference on ‘India-Africa Partnership in a Changing Global Order- Priorities, Prospects and Challenges’**, organised by the **Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA)**, India expressed that it has many common interests with Africa and both have vital stakes in each others’ progress, peace and prosperity.

Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi

- Established in **1943** by a group of Indian intellectuals as a **think tank**.
- A non-official, non-political and non-profit organisation registered under the **Registration of Societies Act 1860**.
- Devoted exclusively for the **study of international relations and foreign affairs**.

Where does India-Africa Partnership stand and how do we move forward in these rapidly changing times?

- The conference discussed **three main themes-**
 - **Firstly**, it addressed the ways in which India and Africa can remodel excellent bilateral relations in a global matrix which is changing rapidly.
 - **Secondly**, it focused on the specifics of the dynamics of India’s relations with different countries in the African continent.
 - **Thirdly** and most importantly, it emphasised on the ways in which the status of African studies in India can be evaluated because a substantive intellectual and academic engagement at the base is required before embarking on a major bilateral engagement.

- It was concluded on the point that there are **numerous opportunities and a great deal of potential** in India-Africa partnership and to harness them we need to move very quickly. Reasons given were-
 - The African continent itself is **changing a great deal** and it has some of the **fastest growing economies** with abundant natural resources.
 - There is also a **renewed interest** in few major economies of the African continent for various reasons which can be sensed by the mention of **New Scramble for Africa** in the conference.

Scramble for Africa: It was the proliferation of conflicting European claims, occupation, division and colonisation of African territory during the New Imperialism period (1881-1914).

How to address the issues?

Steps that can be taken-

- **Focus on Diversity:** By looking into each country **individually in a different manner** because Africa is not a single political entity and offers a lot of diversity.
- **Strengthening ties through Culture:** By moving further with keeping **civilisational and historical relations in mind** because they are important to develop trust and confidence necessary to take a relationship further.
- **Support for Aspirational Economies:** By partnering with aspirational **African economies** which want to come up to the same level of India if not of fully developed countries in few years (**Agenda 2063**).

Agenda 2063- It is Africa's blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. It is the continent's strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development and is a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity.

- **Growth and Development:** By focusing on economic growth, economic & industrial partnership, finding synergies to **work together on already envisioned projects and delivering on them** in the ongoing plans.
- **Security:** By **carefully maintaining our own security interests** without creating a sense of contest because then it can become a delicate situation and give rise to further insecurities. So working on those kind of linkages, cementing the trust and also working for the mutual advantages.
- **People to People Connect:** By working diligently towards making sure that the **African students** who come to study in India become Indian ambassadors in Africa and talk highly of India.

Issues Which Need Further Exploration

Trade

It was negligible in the 1990s but today it has crossed 65 billion dollars.

- Both India and African countries account for almost **one-third of the world's population** giving a good reason to collaborate and move further taking care of each others' **business interests**.
- India's businesses and its attitude has been changing and large number of Indian companies are present in Africa now. So the notion of nation building has changed after the economic reforms of the 1990s and the Indian businesses have become **aggressive and multinational** in their approach.
- Take a **differentiated view of Africa** as there are **Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa (linguistic classification of African countries)** among few others. We have had traditional relations of trade and business with Anglophone Africa but with the rest of the two relations are in building process and need more emphasis.
- India requires **raw materials** like uranium, gold, plutonium, copper etc which can be procured from Africa and in turn India can give them **finished products**. There is this **asymmetrical relationship** in which India has some kind of edge which we can cultivate even further.

Security

- Security needs to be given **more attention for both** India and African nations and both can help each other in training.
- **Energy security** needs more emphasis and enhancement. India is already trying to **import oil from Sudan, Angola, Nigeria and entire Gulf of Guinea region**. This is particularly important because West Asian countries cannot be relied upon completely due to the disturbances and instabilities going on. Also being the members of **Solar Alliance** gives more reasons to strengthen it together.
- **Maritime security** needs promotion for the security of the maritime regions by forming **anti-terrorism and anti-piracy coalitions**. After Indian PM's visit to Seychelles, Mozambique and Tanzania the **Indian interest in South-West Indian Ocean has increased**.
- **Security ties** continue to be important because of the **terrorism link**. Two major terrorist organisations work in Africa, **Boko Haram** in West African region and **Al-Shabaab** in the East African region. These are connected to the major, multinational terrorist organisation **Al-Qaeda** which again is connected to **Lashkar-e-Taiba** and **Jaish-e-Mohemmad** of Pakistan. So terror is an important rallying point.

- **Areas of common interests** between India and Africa **like Indian ocean** as an area of security and the issue of economic cooperation there, needs attention.
- **Economic investments** in energy and infrastructure should also be considered as a part of building the security collaborations.

Mutual Learning

- In South Africa, **Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)** was established abolishing **Apartheid** and white men apologised and black men pardoned. India can learn from such a new experiment.
- African countries like Nigeria or Congo can **learn how federalism and democracy** truly works from India.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

It was a **court like justice restorative body** established by the **South African government** in **1995** to help heal the country and to bring about a reconciliation of its people by uncovering the truth about human rights violations that had occurred during the period of apartheid.

Apartheid

It was a policy which **governed relations** between South Africa's **white minority and non-white majority**. It sanctioned racial segregation, political and economic discrimination against non-whites.

Agriculture

- It has a lot of potential because many African countries have **large unused arable lands**.
- The issue of **food security issue** can be resolved by venturing into it.
- This sector has the **perfect complementarity** with India because we have skilled population in agricultural production, a large market and processing capacities.
- Indian government should make a **Special Purpose Vehicle** to make it possible for the Indians to do farming in Africa because a single body will not be able to handle such a large venture.

Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)

A SPV also called Special Purpose Entity (SPE), is a subsidiary created by a parent company to isolate financial risk. Its legal status as a separate company makes its obligations secure even if the parent company goes bankrupt.

Common Linkages

- **Associations from the past** by linking leaders like Gandhi-Mandela and Nehru-Nkrumah.
- **Similar modern history** with anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-imperialist tendencies and **similar post-colonial history** with post colonial independent nation-states coming up.
- **Indian diaspora** in Africa is looking at their roots and they want to get back so we have to exploit that factor in which **traditional and cultural links** like Bollywood movies and classical dance can play a major role.
- India **needs to go** to Africa and **involve like China**, so that our cultures get mixed and more potential for growth can be explored.

Youth

Indian and African countries have **young people** who aspire to be the drivers in the Information Technology sector and can team up for the developments.

Way Forward

- India and Africa need to **build on the strong base which already exists** and step on in terms of establishing more **diplomatic** missions in a sustained way, more trade missions, continuous **high level engagements** including summit level engagements. And most importantly, there must be a **sustained effort to develop study of Africa** in Indian research institutions and universities.
- Africa is believed to be the continent where human race evolved actually so Africans pushback the idea of India being the cultural superpower so **building partnerships and collaborations to demonstrate the closeness of human race** in India and Africa can help.
- More focus should be given to the **contemporary areas of collaboration** like economy, investment, infrastructure development and human resources.

The partnership between India and Africa has strong traditional and historical base and there are common grounds or linkages between both and it is time to build on them further from here onwards, be it culture, be it security or areas like trade, technology or agriculture.