

15.16 hrs.

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

Recent visits to Italy, France and Egypt

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH): Madam, Speaker, I returned earlier today from visits to France and Egypt. Before that I had visited Italy for the G-8/G-5 Summit meetings.

Meetings of the G-8 and G-5 countries have become an annual feature. The agenda for this year's meetings was wide ranging, but the main focus was on the on-going global economic and financial slowdown.

The developing countries have been the most affected by the global financial and economic crisis. I stressed the importance of a concerted and well-coordinated global response to address systemic failures and to stimulate the real economy. There is need to maintain adequate flow of finance to the developing countries and to keep markets open by resisting protectionist pressures.


As a responsible member of the international community, I conveyed to the G-8 and G-5 countries that we recognize our obligation to preserve and protect our environment but climate change cannot be addressed by perpetuating the poverty of the developing countries. I presented India's Action Plan on Climate Change and the eight National Missions which we have set up in this regard. We are willing to do more provided there are credible arrangements to provide both additional financial support as well as technological transfers from developed to developing countries.

India's participation as guest of honour at the French National Day was an honour and a matter of pride for us all. I wish to share with the hon. Members the pride I felt to see the brave men of our Armed Forces from all three Services leading the French National Day parade. We have a strategic partnership with France. In this spirit, in our discussions, President Sarkozy and I reviewed the

entire range of our bilateral cooperation including counter-terrorism and defence co-operation. President Sarkozy was categorical in asserting that France is ready for full civilian nuclear cooperation with India.

In Egypt I participated in the 15th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. NAM is the powerful voice of almost two-third of the world's nations. I recalled what Pandit Nehru had said about NAM being a moral force in global affairs. The Summit called for bringing decision-making processes in the international system, including the UN and international financial institutions, in tune with contemporary realities. I am glad that our views found widespread resonance and that the Summit heeded our call to strongly condemn international terrorism.

On the sidelines of the Summit, I met with the Presidents of Egypt, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and the Palestinian National Authority, and the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nepal and Pakistan. I found a uniform desire among all these countries to further enhance their relations with India.

During my meeting with Prime Minister Gilani of Pakistan yesterday, we discussed the present condition of India-Pakistan relations, its future potential and the steps that are necessary to enable us to realize the potential. 

I conveyed to him the strong sentiments of the people of India over the issue of terrorism, especially the terrorist attacks in Mumbai. We are reviewing the dossier of investigations into these attacks which Pakistan has provided to us. I also conveyed to Prime Minister Gilani that sustained, effective and credible action needs to be taken not only to bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai attack to justice but also to shut down the operations of terrorist groups so as to prevent any future attacks.

It has been and it remains our consistent position that the starting point of any meaningful dialogue with Pakistan is a fulfillment of their commitment, in letter and spirit, not to allow their territory to be used in any manner for terrorist activities against India.

Prime Minister Gilani assured me that Pakistan will do everything in its power to bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks to justice. He also told me that there is consensus in Pakistan against the activities of these terrorist groups, that strong action is being taken and that this is in Pakistan's own interest. The distinguished parliamentarians from different parties who accompanied the Pakistan Prime Minister also said to me that there was political consensus in Pakistan on this issue.

As the Joint Statement says, action on terrorism should not be linked to the composite dialogue process, and therefore cannot await other developments. It was agreed that the two countries will share real time, credible and actionable information on any future threats.

Whether, when and in what form we broaden the dialogue with Pakistan will depend on future developments. For the present, we have agreed that the Foreign Secretaries will meet as often as necessary and report to the two Foreign Ministers who will meet on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.

Madam, as I have said before in this House, India seeks cooperative relations with Pakistan, and engagement is the only way forward to realize the vision of a stable and prosperous South Asia living in peace and amity. We are willing to go more than half way provided Pakistan creates the conditions for a meaningful dialogue. I hope that there is forward movement in the coming months.

Madam, I have returned home convinced that these interactions with world leaders have served to further advance India's interests.

(Placed in Library, See No. LT 348/15/09)

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज (विदिशा): अध्यक्ष महोदया, माननीय प्रधानमंत्री जी ने, जो बात मैंने सुबह कही थी,
...(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदया : कृपया आप शांत रहें।