

# Speech by Minister of State for External Affairs M.J. Akbar at the 17th NAM Summit

September 15, 2016

**Excellency, Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez  
Distinguished members of the Non-Aligned Movement  
Ladies and Gentleman**

Madam Chairman, let me congratulate the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for assuming the Chairmanship of the Non-aligned Movement.

Excellency Mr Jawad Zarif, on behalf of our nation and all members of the Non-Aligned Movement, I would like to thank the Islamic Republic of Iran for the outstanding leadership it has provided to our movement over the last four years.

**Excellencies,**

The Non Aligned Movement, the largest comity of nations outside the United Nations, is testament to the power of an idea sustained by a humane ideology. What is this idea? That the history of mankind, stained by war, conquest, domination and revenge, must turn the page and seek a world that believes in peace both as an objective and as the means to this objective. Conflict is an irrational approach to conflict resolution. Dialogue is the intelligent option.

It is not a question of giving peace a chance. Peace is the only chance we have.

Madam Chairperson, I congratulate our movement for the theme chosen for this Summit, "Peace, Sovereignty and solidarity for development". Today, all three are threatened by an exceptionally venomous form of war, terrorism.

This raises an existential question. Shall our children inherit a garden or a graveyard? Inertia is not an option, only a dangerous temptation. Indifference will trap us in a toxic swamp.

The challenge lies in a conundrum. The meaning of peace has not changed between Bandung, Belgrade and Margarita, but the meaning of war has. Its predominant current manifestation is terrorism and it thrives in hidden corners as well as plain sight. It seeks to change not only geography but also our psyche. It aims to destroy both state and society by pouring acid into social harmony through the dread of random murder and mayhem among innocents.

Terrorism is the biggest enemy of human rights. The subjugation of terrorists is, therefore, protection of human rights.

Terrorism threatens the contemporary architecture of world stability, based on respect for sovereignty. We must not be so naïve as to believe that terrorists do not have a political objective. They are anti-national in a fundamental sense: for they do not believe in the concept of a nation state.

In the last two hundred years, the world has witnessed the extraordinary transition from the age of empire to the era of independent nations. The process began, it must be noted with pride, with our host, Venezuela. Since then, every single empire across the globe has collapsed. The vacuum has been filled by nation states. Today, terrorist bandit groups like Daesh, Hizbul Mujahideen, Jaish e Muhammad, Boko Haram, Al Shabaab and so many others of their ilk, want to establish empires of destruction bolstered by false ideology that perverts the faith they claim to represent.

Terrorism is the biggest obstacle to development at a time when the poor are insisting, and rightly so, that they cannot wait any longer for prosperity. The first rights on economic growth must belong to those who need development most, and they must get it now, not tomorrow. Speaking on behalf of my nation India, they shall.

Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described terrorism as the gravest threat since world war two. He chooses his words with care. How do we confront this threat? The first essential is clarity. We cannot afford the luxury of illusion, or the sin of hypocrisy. Governments which think that they can pay lip service to sanity at a NAM summit, and continue to arm, shelter and exploit terrorists in a 'war by other means' when they return home, will learn that you cannot sup on poison and hope to live.

We urge our fellow nations to accept a specific route map towards our common horizon of peace and prosperity:

- NAM must walk the talk and set up a "NAM Working Group on Terrorism".
- My country has, for several years, called for significant strengthening of the international legal system to imbed into international law and custom legal principles like "zero tolerance for direct or indirect support for terror", and the right to "prosecute or extradite". The proposal to pass a Venezuela declaration for an early international convention on international terrorism is therefore of great significance to my country. The stress must be on "early".
- We must ensure that existing United Nations structures as part of the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy function in a non-partisan and professional manner, above political expediency. This NAM summit must be as unambiguous on terrorism as it was once about apartheid and colonialism.

**Excellencies,**

NAM must ensure that the pending mandate of the UN World Summit in 2005 on UN reforms, which specifically called for urgent reforms of the Security Council, is fulfilled. We must not allow the process to become an exercise in perpetuity.

Agenda 2030 is an ambitious vision for sustainable development of all humankind.

The promise of balanced development for all, the commitment to reinvigorate international partnerships to help achieve Goals and Targets set out, or the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility", must not be lost or diluted in debate. Implementation of Agenda 2030 must be a priority for NAM under your Chairmanship. We cannot waste the people's time, and governments' resources, on endless reams of paper. We must act.

**Excellencies,**

For too long international affairs have been influenced by a concept known as "balance of power". Let us at this NAM summit offer an alternative: The power of balance. This phrase also describes our historic responsibility. Balance is the source of individual and collective harmony. Balance will protect the present and save the future.

**Thank You.**