

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE ON THE OCCASION OF INAUGURATION OF THE  
“COUNTER-TERRORISM CONFERENCE-2016”**

**JAIPUR: 2<sup>ND</sup> FEBRUARY, 2016**

1. I am delighted to be amidst you this evening at the inauguration of the 2nd edition of the Counter-Terrorism Conference organised by the India Foundation in collaboration with Government of Rajasthan. It is heartening to note that this conference has brought together field operatives, senior officials from security agencies, policy makers, scholars and government leaders involved in counter-terrorism operations, planning and sensitization to discuss ways of tackling global terror outfits.
2. Peace is the primary objective of rational consciousness as well as a moral universe. It is the foundation of civilization and a necessity for economic success. And yet, we have never been able to answer a simple question: why does peace remain so elusive? Why has peace been so much more difficult to attain than conflict? These are the questions we need to ponder upon, both as a civilization and as a society.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. As the twentieth century closed down with a remarkable revolution in science and technology, we had some reason for optimism in the direction of peace and prosperity. That optimism has faded in the first fifteen years of this century. There is unprecedented turbulence across vast regions, with alarming increase in regional instabilities. The scourge of terrorism has reshaped war into its most barbaric manifestation. No corner in the world is now safe from this savage monster.
4. Terrorism is inspired by insane objectives, motivated by bottomless depths of hatred, instigated by puppeteers who have invested heavily in havoc through the mass murder of innocents. This is war beyond any doctrine, a cancer which must be operated out with a firm scalpel. There is no good or bad terrorism; it is pure evil.

5. Terrorism is undoubtedly the single gravest threat that humanity is facing today. Whether in Paris or Pathankot, terrorist attacks on democracies are attacks against fundamental values of liberty, freedom and universal brotherhood. Terrorism is a global threat which poses an unprecedented challenge to all nations. No cause can justify terrorist acts. It is imperative that the world acts in unison against terrorism, without political considerations. Therefore, there is a need to take a resolve to not justify terrorist means whatever be the reason or the source.
6. Till the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, terrorism had regional or national connotations. With the emergence of first Al-Qaeda and now IS, those boundaries have shattered. Non-state actors are trying to be the State themselves, spreading radical ideologies across societies, using technologies to the fullest extent to attract youth. In such a scenario mere political and military strategies will not suffice. We need to take social, economic, religious and psychological aspects into consideration.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. In the history of terrorism, the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, is certainly a watershed moment. That moment defines the genesis of modern-day counter terrorism in the international context. From that single incident have flowed most of the interventions in the counter-terrorism sphere that we see happening at the international level as also at the regional and domestic levels. Faced with the spectre of terrorism, the Western world has undertaken a lot in terms of strategy and tactics and has achieved results also. We need to carefully examine and learn lessons from the success and failure of these strategies.
8. We may, at the same time, do well to remember that South Asia has been facing terrorist violence since decades in various forms. There is a peculiar nature to this terrorism. To counter that, South Asian countries, including India, have developed certain capabilities. We need to similarly discuss and deliberate on the effectiveness of these strategies and how these have impacted on our counter – terrorism capabilities.

9. An important aspect of counter-terrorism strategy is capacity building to prevent attacks through intelligence collection and collation, development of technological capabilities, raising of Special Forces and enactment of special laws. Though we have evolved certain mechanisms in this direction, there is scope for further intensifying these efforts.
10. Counter terrorism is generally considered to be about tactics, weapons, force levels and intelligence gathering. While these things are important the predominant focus has to be on the political management of terrorism. This includes addressing issues of ideology and dealing with countries that sponsor or support terrorism. It is imperative that the world in one voice rejects all manifestations of terrorism, without distinction, and proscribes States that support or sponsor terrorism as an instrument of State policy.
11. We cannot also forget the fact that civil society is both the frontier and the battleground which has to be protected and saved. Fragmentation of civil society, rather than its consolidation, is not a wise strategy. The former course leads to radicalization, which thereafter leads to competitive violence. Think tanks and civil society organizations have a larger role to play in this process of social integration. A pluralistic and inclusive society like India has long presented a model for multi-cultural living. It is for this reason that global terror outfits have not been able to find traction in India. We have, as a nation, to strengthen that plurality so that it acts as a bulwark against radical ideologies and thought processes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. These aspects highlight the fact that there is a need for comprehensive strategies and greater international cooperation to ward off future threats. Our counter-terrorism effort has to be more pointed, more focused, more objective and more professional. While doing so there will always be a dilemma of whether we are threatening individual liberties or human rights. We have, therefore, to be judicious in protecting larger freedoms and democratic values. We need to fight this scourge at all levels- through shaping of public opinion, society building and evolving a concerted and integrated counter- terrorism policy premised on international cooperation in intelligence sharing. Needless to say, it also entails taking concerted action to shut down the financial networks that support and sustain terrorism.

13. I am confident that this conference shall deliberate on the challenges posed by global terror outfits, and examine the possibility of sharing capabilities with a view to combating larger dimensions of this threat. With these few words, I conclude. I wish you and the deliberations of the Conference all success.

Jai Hind.

\*\*\*\*\*