

Remarks by High Commissioner during Deck Reception onboard INS Tarkash at Mombasa Port (30 September 2026)

Colonel Robert T. Birech, Deputy Fleet Commander, Kenya Navy Fleet;

Distinguished Officers of the Kenya Defence Forces;

Captain Rohit Mishra, Commanding Officer, Nau Sena Medal, Indian Naval Ship Tarkash, and her distinguished crew;

Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished members of the Indian community and the local Indian diaspora from Mombasa;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Habari za jioni. Karibuni sana.
Good evening and Namaskar!

1. It is a great pleasure to welcome you all onboard Indian Naval Ship Tarkash, here in the historic port city of Mombasa.
2. Mombasa has, for centuries, been a meeting point of peoples, cultures and commerce across the Indian Ocean. It is therefore particularly fitting that we gather here this evening on the deck of an Indian Naval ship to celebrate a friendship that has itself been shaped by the ocean that connects our two countries.
3. India and Kenya are bound by history, by strong people-to-people ties and by a shared maritime destiny. The Indian Ocean does not divide us—it connects us. These waters carry our trade, sustain our coastal communities and increasingly shape our collective security and prosperity.
4. At the same time, the maritime domain today confronts challenges ranging from piracy and trafficking to illegal fishing, natural disasters and other non-traditional threats. These challenges remind us that the security of the seas can only be ensured through cooperation, mutual trust and strong partnerships among maritime nations.
5. India's maritime engagement is guided by the vision of MAHASAGAR – Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions. At its heart is the belief that security, economic growth and regional stability must advance together, through partnership, capacity building and mutual respect. Our partnership with Kenya reflects precisely this approach.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. The presence of INS Tarkash in Mombasa today is a visible symbol of the growing maritime engagement between India and Kenya. Such port calls provide valuable opportunities for our sailors and officers to interact, learn from one another and further strengthen the professional bonds between the Indian Navy and the Kenya Navy.

7. Over the years, our two Navies have developed a relationship founded on professional respect and trust. India remains committed to supporting the Kenya Navy through training, professional exchanges and capacity building, based on Kenya's priorities and requirements. Regular interactions between our two Navies, both ashore and at sea, continue to add substance and continuity to this partnership.

8. An important next step will be the second edition of the Africa-India Key Maritime Engagement – AIKEYME, which India and Kenya are preparing to co-host in Mombasa in 2027. AIKEYME represents much more than an exercise at sea. It reflects our shared commitment to bringing African maritime nations together, strengthening interoperability and building collective capacity to address the challenges facing our common maritime domain.

9. Our defence relationship, however, is today much broader than maritime cooperation alone.

10. What was once a relationship centred substantially on training has now evolved into a genuinely tri-Service partnership, encompassing the Army, Navy and Air Force. Across the three Services, our engagement today includes professional military education, specialised training, capacity building, institutional exchanges and increasingly frequent interaction between our senior military leadership.

11. The recent visit of the Commander Kenya Air Force to India is an important example of this growing engagement. His interactions with the Indian Air Force and visits to Indian military and aviation institutions opened further opportunities for closer Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation, training and exchange of expertise.

12. Together with our longstanding Army-to-Army ties and the steadily deepening relationship between our two Navies, this demonstrates the increasingly comprehensive character of India–Kenya defence cooperation.

13. And this defence partnership forms part of a much wider relationship between India and Kenya.

14. The High Commission continues to work closely with our Kenyan partners across education, capacity building, healthcare, development cooperation, culture and people-to-people exchanges. Through ITEC training opportunities, scholarships for Kenyan students, cooperation in healthcare and a growing range of institutional partnerships, our endeavour is to ensure that the India–Kenya relationship creates tangible and lasting value for our peoples.

15. The vibrant Indian community in Kenya—and particularly the historic Indian community here on the Coast—has been an important bridge between our countries for generations. It gives our partnership a depth that goes well beyond official engagements.

Distinguished Guests,

16. India values Kenya as an important partner in East Africa and in the Western Indian Ocean. We deeply appreciate the professionalism of the Kenya Defence Forces and the warmth with which our Armed Forces have always been received here.

17. Major General Otieno, I would particularly like to acknowledge your personal commitment, and that of the Kenya Navy, towards strengthening the relationship between our two Navies.

18. For India, partnership means being reliable, responsive and present. It means building capabilities together, sharing experience, learning from one another and standing by our friends when required. It is in this spirit that India remains committed to being a trusted and dependable partner of Kenya.

19. This visit of INS Tarkash is therefore more than a port call. It is a reaffirmation of friendship, of professional trust and of our shared commitment to building an even stronger partnership in the years ahead.

20. As I conclude, I thank our Chief Guest, Major General Paul Otieno, our distinguished guests and friends from the Kenya Defence Forces, and all of you for joining us this evening. I also congratulate Captain Rohit Mishra and the entire crew of INS Tarkash for representing India with professionalism and pride.

21. I invite you all to enjoy the hospitality and flavours of India onboard this fine ship—a little piece of India here in Mombasa this evening.

22. As we stand together on the shores of the Indian Ocean, may these waters that have connected our peoples for generations continue to remain a bridge—

A bridge of friendship.

A bridge of partnership.

And a bridge towards shared security and prosperity.

Thank you. Asanteni sana. Jai Hind.