

Press Statement by Dr. Adarsh Swaika, High Commissioner of India

18 December 2025

Good morning, Jambo

Thank you all for joining me today.

This is my first engagement with Kenyan media since assuming charge as the High Commissioner of India. I look forward to interacting with you regularly over the next few years to share developments in our bilateral relations with Kenya, which we consider as one of our most important partner country in the region.

2. As you all may know and appreciate, India and Kenya share a relationship that is historic, time-tested and rooted in extensive people to people ties. Today, much of it is driven by strong strategic, economic, and developmental cooperation. However, to understand where India–Kenya relationship is going, we must first understand where it began from.

3. For more than 2000 years, the Indian subcontinent and the Swahili coast were connected by continuous exchange of goods, ideas and people. Among these, one of the most poignant examples of our shared history was the construc-

tion of the railway from Mombasa to Uganda in late 19th century by over 32,000 Indian workers. The railway was built at an enormous human cost, almost 2500 lost their lives with many injured, but it was one that transformed the region and laid the foundations of modern Kenya. Mombasa, Nairobi, and Kisumu grew into major urban centers along this line. On completion of the railway, several thousand Indian workers chose to stay back for different vocations forming the backbone of early urban life.

Friends,

4. Another epochal event of our shared journey was the significant role played by Indian soldiers in East Africa during the First World War, a chapter often overlooked. Between 1914 and 1918, over 40,000 Indian troops served in the East African theatre. Thousands of Indian soldiers died not only in combat but from disease, exhaustion, and lack of supplies. They served alongside African troops, sharing the same hardships. Their contribution was critical to the Allied campaign in East Africa. Today, their graves, memorials, and records across Kenya and the region stand as silent testimony to this shared wartime sacrifice. Earlier this year, India and Kenya jointly unveiled the Joint India–Africa Commemorative Pillar at Taita Taveta, honouring these Indian and African soldiers.

5. The Indian presence in Kenya or the then East African region was not limited to labour or commerce or military. Most importantly, Indians and persons of Indian origin were deeply involved in Kenya's political awakening and freedom struggle. Indian lawyers, journalists, workers, and activists were among the earliest to challenge racial discrimination not only for Indians, but for all Kenyans. One of the most influential figures was Makhan Singh, widely regarded as the father of the trade union movement in Kenya. Another towering figure was Pio Gama Pinto, a journalist, intellectual, and freedom fighter, who worked closely with leaders of Kenya's independence movement, including the first Kenyan President Jomo Kenyatta, and played a key role in mobilizing political thought and international support for Kenya's freedom.

6. Indian-owned newspapers, printing presses, and publishing houses as well as Indian-run schools, libraries, and social organizations also contributed to education and political awareness. The struggle against colonial rule was collective, and Indians were active participants in that shared struggle. Mahatma Gandhi's ideas of civil rights, equality, and non-violent resistance — shaped during his struggle against racial discrimination in southern Africa — influenced liberation movements across Africa, including Kenya.

Friends,

7. From this long, complex, and sometimes painful shared history emerged a natural partnership between two independent nations. What gives this relationship strength is precisely this history — a history of shared sacrifice, shared struggle, and shared contribution.

8. This was reflected in Government of India's gesture of facilitation of repatriation of mortal remains of former Kenyan PM Rt Hon'ble Raila Amolo Odinga with full honours and dignity. He was a long-standing friend of India, an admirer of Indian culture, particularly Ayurveda and shared a warm personal relationship with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Such moments, though solemn, speak powerfully of the trust and closeness between our countries, reminding us that diplomacy is ultimately about people and standing by one another in times of grief as well as celebration. We have had many such moments in the journey of our bilateral relations, even when we were not modern nation-states.

9. Today, our bilateral relations are growing from strength to strength, marked by regular high-level engagements at the level of Heads of State and Government, Ministers, senior officials, etc. we also have cooperation between other pillars of democracy – the Parliament and the Judiciary. Visits of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Kenya in 2016 and President William Ruto to India in 2023 have

provided strategic direction to the partnership. Over the last five years, ministerial engagement has intensified across sectors including political, defence, trade, investments, health, agriculture, digital technologies and solutions, education, culture, and so on. These visits have focused on concrete outcomes and have been critical in translating leadership vision into cooperation on the ground. As we speak, Minister of Health of Kenya is proceeding to India for the India-WHO Summit on Alternative medicine in New Delhi. Minister of State for External Affairs and Environment of India attended the UNEA-7 last week and had bilateral meetings with his Kenyan counterparts. A delegation led by Secretary to Cabinet visited India in October to understand and replicate India's digital public infrastructure solutions. A delegation led by Kenya Investment Authority visited New Delhi and Bangalore in first week of December to explore trade and investment opportunities in pharmaceuticals, leather, ICT & BPO. Over 40 Indian companies are currently displaying water treatment technologies in KICC for the last 2 days.

Friends,

10. It is this level of political trust and strategic alignment that makes deeper cooperation possible in strategic areas such as defence and security. Defence

cooperation has expanded rapidly in recent years, evolving into a multi-dimensional partnership encompassing training, UN peacekeeping, defence industry collaboration, maritime engagement, medical support, and humanitarian assistance.

11. Training and peacekeeping cooperation remain central. India and Kenya work closely in preparing forces for United Nations peacekeeping operations, including through institutional collaboration between Kenya's International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC) and India's Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK). This reflects a shared commitment to global peace, stability, and multilateral responsibility. At the same time, defence cooperation has moved into capacity creation, with collaboration between Indian and Kenyan shipyards on ship design, construction, and skills development — signalling a shift from simple exchanges to long-term capability building. Over 35 Indian naval and Coast Guard ships have made port calls at Mombasa and Lamu ports since 2010.

12. The partnership is also visible in tangible support that directly benefits people. Earlier this year, India commissioned a greenfield CT Scan Radiology Complex at the Kenya Navy Hospital in Mombasa on grant basis, strengthening Kenya's defence medical infrastructure.

13. Most importantly, this partnership has proven itself in moments of crisis. When Kenya faced devastating floods in May 2024, India responded immediately with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. 40 MT of relief material was delivered by Indian Naval Ship Sumedha and by an Indian Air Force C-17 aircraft, carrying tents, blankets, food, power generators, medical supplies, and life-saving equipment. Similar solidarity was seen during Covid-19 when India supplied over a million 'Made in India' vaccines to Kenya as well as to over 150 countries despite its own requirements to cater to 1.4 billion people.

Friends,

14. It is a common belief now to measure the strength of a bilateral relationship from the economic lens. And our bilateral ties stand quite tall in that regard with India currently being Kenya's third-largest trading partner with annual trade figures of around USD 3.5 billion. Most importantly, Indian exports are consumption based and do not substitute Kenyan products manufactured locally. At the same time, Kenyan exports to India have increased by nearly 80 % over the last year, reflecting growing market access. Beyond trade figures, India is also one of Kenya's most significant long-term investment partners. Nearly 200 Indian com-

panies operate in Kenya, employing tens of thousands of Kenyans directly and many more indirectly, while transferring skills, technology, and management practices.

15. Indian investments are spread across a wide range of sectors that touch everyday life and support Kenya's economic transformation. In industry and manufacturing, Indian companies present in Kenya include Tata, Larsen & Toubro, Mahindra & Mahindra, Ashok Leyland, and other firms engaged in engineering, construction, automobiles, steel, and industrial services. Bajaj and TVS motorcycles are a household name in Kenya. It is a matter of satisfaction that an Indian PSU has been chosen recently for a large power transmission project in Kenya. In telecommunications and digital services, Indian companies such as Bharti Airtel and technology firms like Zoho are active. In banking, finance, and insurance, Indian public sector institutions including Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, and Kenindia Assurance have operated in Kenya for decades.

16. In consumer goods, Indian companies such as Godrej are present, while in pharmaceuticals and healthcare, a large number of Indian pharmaceutical companies supply quality and affordable medicines to Kenya's public and private health systems.

17. A strong institutional signal of India's growing economic engagement with Kenya is the decision by the Export–Import Bank of India to shift its Representative Office for East Africa from Addis Ababa to Nairobi last year. This move reflects India's confidence in Kenya as a regional financial and commercial hub and underscores Nairobi's role as a gateway for Indian trade, investment, and development financing across East Africa.

18. And this interest of Indian companies in Kenya is only growing year by year. Over the last two years alone, more than 1,600 Indian companies have visited Kenya as part of trade delegations, business missions, exhibitions, and sector-specific expos. Importantly, these delegations are not limited to large corporations. They include small and medium enterprises, startups, and first-time investors. These visits reflect the strong and sustained confidence of Indian industry in Kenya's economic fundamentals — its stability, its skilled workforce, its improving infrastructure, and its role as a gateway to the wider East African region.

Friends,

19. While private investment drives growth and employment, public development cooperation ensures that this growth is inclusive, sustainable, and aligned

with national priorities. India's development partnership with Kenya is demand-driven and capacity-focused. Government of India has extended Lines of Credit worth over USD 200 million in recent years, with projects ranging from power transmission and textile modernization, to support SMEs in Kenya.

20. Education and capacity building remain among the most valued and enduring dimensions of the India–Kenya partnership. Every year, Government of India offers around 400 fully funded scholarships and training opportunities for Kenyan nationals, covering long-term academic study as well as short-term and customised training programmes for officials from various government ministries, county governments and public institutions. Over 2000 long-term study and over 2400 short-term training courses in last 10 years have been organized on fully funded basis for Kenyan nationals under these programmes — including civil servants, engineers, doctors, entrepreneurs, defence personnel, teachers, and young scholars. In addition, a large number of Kenyans have traditionally been going to India for educational purposes on self-financing basis. Over time, this growing community of India-trained Kenyans has become one of the strongest and most trusted bridges in the India–Kenya relationship, ensuring that our partnership is anchored not just in agreements, but in human experience.

21. India has also emerged as a leading destination for medical treatment for Kenyan citizens, reflecting deep trust in India's healthcare systems. Almost 10,000 Kenyans travelled to India this year for medical treatment, seeking care across a wide range of specialities. India's hospitals combine high clinical standards, advanced medical technology, and highly trained doctors, with treatment costs that are significantly more affordable than in many other destinations. What draws patients from Kenya to India is not cost alone, but confidence and continuity of care.

22. All of this cooperation — in education, training, business, and healthcare — depends on one practical enabler: the ability of people to move easily between our two countries. India has steadily simplified its visa regime for Kenyans, including Electronic-visa. In 2025 so far, around 21,000 visas have already been issued to Kenyan citizens — the majority through the fully online e-Visa system.

Friends,

23. Over time, these extensive people to people linkages have created a deep sense of familiarity — making India present in everyday Kenyan life, and Kenya

deeply understood in India. Kenya is home to a vibrant Indian diaspora of approximately 80,000 to 100,000 people, many of them 5th-6th generation Indian Kenyans. Their deep roots were formally recognised in 2017, when Kenyans of Asian origin were acknowledged as the country's 44th tribe. The Indian diaspora has contributed significantly to economic development, education, healthcare, trade, industry, and philanthropy, while also serving as a natural bridge between India and Kenya. Across the country, Indian-Kenyan community organisations quietly support social initiatives — from feeding schoolchildren and supporting healthcare to community welfare — reaching tens of thousands of beneficiaries on a daily basis, often without any publicity. That is why many of them have been recipients of Presidential awards in Kenya for their socio-economic work for the development of the society.

24. Indian popular culture is also deeply familiar in Kenyan homes. Bollywood films and Indian television soap operas are among the most widely watched foreign content on Kenyan channels, resonating with audiences through shared values of family and community. There are even linguistic links, with Swahili incorporating words of Indian origin such as *dukka* and *chai*, reflecting centuries of Indian Ocean interaction. We have also been organizing cultural events in Kenya to showcase various facets of Indian culture, including performance by a Ra-

jasthani folk dance troupe last month. We are trying to organize more Indian cultural events in different parts of Kenya next year. Similarly, Kenyan artists would be participating in the famous International Surajkund Mela in India in February 2026.

25. Yoga is one of the most visible contemporary expressions of India's cultural connection with Kenya. As a holistic system of physical and mental well-being, yoga has gained wide acceptance across Kenyan society. Through regular outreach, workshops, and classes by the High Commission, over 20,000 Kenyans have been trained in yoga. The International Day of Yoga is celebrated with great enthusiasm every year, drawing thousands of participants, including over 5,000 at the main annual event, along with multiple satellite events across the country.

26. Similarly, there is a growing trend of visitors from India to Kenya for tourism purposes. Indian tourist arrivals in 2024 was around 1,33,000 making it the 5th largest nationality by foreign visitor arrivals in Kenya. The Embassy remains a 'Home away from home' for Indian citizens. Consular assistance is provided to Indian nationals in need or distress immediately to the extent possible. We have been regularly organizing consular camps in far-flung areas of Kenya, including in Kisumu 2 days back.

Friends,

27. India today stands at a transformational moment in its economic journey. I would like to highlight some major facets of Indian economy:

- 4th largest economy in the world with GDP of USD 4.19 trillion and poised to become 3rd largest before 2030;
- Fastest-growing major economies globally with a consistent growth rate of over 6-7% for over a decade;
- 2nd largest road network globally with over 25 kms of national highways being added every day and 4th largest rail network with over 5,000 kms of railway lines added annually;
- Doubling of airports from 74 to 159 in last 10 years;
- World-class digital public infrastructure with more than half of the world's real-time digital payments taking place in India; around 20 billion digital transactions per month
- 4th largest installed renewable energy capacity; 259 GW already achieved against a target of 500 GW by 2030;
- 3rd largest Start-Ups hub globally with 3rd highest Unicorns (120+)

- Pharmacy of the world; largest supplier of generic drugs with over 20% of global market
- Largest global producer of milk, millets and spices; 2nd largest global producer of rice, wheat, fish and horticulture crops;
- 2nd largest mobile handset manufacturer globally;
- And so on

28. India's long-term vision of a 'Developed India,' by 2047 i.e Viksit Bharat 2047, aligns closely with Kenya's Vision 2030. Both emphasize industrialization, job creation, digital transformation, clean energy, and human development. This alignment creates significant scope for cooperation in manufacturing, renewable energy, digital services, healthcare, education, agribusiness, and youth employment. For Kenya, India offers not only a large and growing market, but also a partner that has navigated similar development challenges and is willing to share experience, technology, and capacity.

29. As India's economic capacity has grown, so too has its sense of responsibility in shaping a more inclusive global order. India's foreign policy is guided by the ancient Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', the world is one fam-

ily. India exercises strategic autonomy in its foreign policy without any alignment with specific group of countries. It is part of all major international or regional groupings be it the G-20 or the BRICS or Quad or SCO. The multilateral cooperation is based on similar approach towards a particular set of issues. Relations with countries are based on their own merit rather than being influenced by other relations. India believes that international disputes and conflicts should be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy.

30. India continues to take a leadership role in voicing issues that matter to the Global South, particularly stronger African voices in global decision-making. The 'Voice of Global South Summit' organized by India in 2023 with participation of over 100 developing countries was to mainstream the aspirations and developmental needs of developing countries in the agenda of G-20. India played a decisive role in securing the African Union's permanent membership during India's Presidency of the G20, ensuring Africa a seat at the highest table of global economic decision-making.

31. India has also taken the lead in practical, action-oriented international initiatives, including the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), and the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA). Kenya has shown strong interest in engaging

with these initiatives, reflecting shared priorities in renewable energy, climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable growth.

32. India has been playing its due role in the UN, including being one of the largest UN troop contributing countries to setting up a South-South Trust Fund. However, India believes that the UN and the global financial architecture cannot move ahead if its systems remain locked in the past. That is why India has emphasized a Global Development Compact. In UNEP and UN-Habitat based in Nairobi, India has always played a constructive role to advance the agenda of these two bodies. Indian Resolutions on 'Mission LiFE' and 'Management of Wild-fires' piloted in UN Environment Assembly in 2023 and 2025 have helped in formulation of key policies in these areas. India and Kenya cooperate closely in the United Nations and other multilateral fora based on similarity of views and positions on most of the issues.

33. India's engagement with Africa is partnership-based, grounded in respect, shared growth, and long-term commitment. India does not see Africa merely as a destination of opportunity, but as a partner in shaping the global future. Towards that end, India has organized 3 editions of the India-Africa Summit, a key platform for engagement with all African countries. India's connection with Africa has

grown manifold in the last decade. Kenya, with its regional leadership, dynamic economy, and young population, is central to that vision.

Friends,

34. Overall, I would say that India-Kenya relationship is one that is progressing rapidly. We expect high-level engagements in near future that will further give a strategic direction further to these multifaceted relations. Going forward, the focus of the High Commission would be on strengthening our economic cooperation, new and high-technology areas, cultural bonds and more youth exchanges.

35. I look forward to the support of friends from media in regularly highlighting bilateral developments between India and Kenya and become a part of Indian-Kenyan story.

Asanteni Sana.