

# **Iceland – India Joint Statement during the visit of Foreign Minister of Iceland to India (5 April 2016)**

*5 April 2016*

At the invitation of Smt. Sushma Swaraj, the External Affairs Minister of India, the Foreign Minister of Iceland, Mr. Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, visited India from 03-09 April 2016. He was accompanied by a business delegation organized by Promote Iceland. India and Iceland have regularly exchanged visits at a high level, the most recent being the visit of the President of Iceland to India in 2013.

On 5 April, Foreign Minister Sveinsson and EAM Sushma Swaraj held discussions on bilateral issues as well as important regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest. The Ministers agreed on continuing to strengthen the bilateral economic relations between the countries, such as in the areas of renewable energy, particularly geothermal energy, tourism, start-ups and extended trade relations. They agreed that a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement between India and the EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) would facilitate more economic relations between the two countries. They, furthermore, exchanged views on important global issues such as climate change, United Nations reforms, and the global menace of terrorism. To further strengthen the relations between the two countries the Ministers agreed to work on increasing the number of high-level official visits between the two countries and advocate for further mutual visits of business delegations between the two countries.

The Ministers discussed the challenges of climate change for the Arctic and the Himalayan regions and the importance of continued scientific cooperation aimed at understanding better the implications of climate change for the ice covers and glaciers in the two regions. They also acknowledged that any economic activities in these ecologically fragile regions needed to be based on the principle of sustainable development.

Both Ministers affirmed the urgent need for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations Security Council, including its expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories, so as to make it more effective, efficient and representative of the contemporary geo-political realities. Iceland re-affirmed its support for India as a permanent member in an expanded United Nations Security Council. The two countries expressed support for forward movement in the Intergovernmental Negotiations on United Nations Security Council reforms, and reiterated their commitment to initiate text-based negotiations within the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly.

Both Ministers stressed their shared interest in promoting women's rights and gender equality. Foreign Minister Sveinsson briefed EAM Sushma Swaraj on the second Barbershop Conference to be held at the UN in New York next May. Both Ministers agreed to encourage the participation of UN Permanent Representations in the event.

The two Ministers condemned terrorism in all forms and manifestations that constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. They reaffirmed that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivations, whenever and by whomsoever committed. In this context they called for an early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

Both Ministers also underlined their shared interest in strengthening global non-proliferation objectives. In this regard, Iceland expressed its support for India's membership in the relevant multilateral export control regimes.

During the visit, Foreign Minister Sveinsson had a meeting with Shri Piyush Goyal, Minister of State (Independent charge) for Power, Coal and New & Renewable Energy. They discussed their mutual interest in promoting renewable energy and in cooperating in the area of geothermal energy, where Icelandic and Indian companies are exploring the possibilities of setting up joint ventures to harness geothermal energy in India. The Ministers, furthermore, discussed the importance of the Global Geothermal Alliance for promoting the use of geothermal energy throughout the world.

Foreign Minister Sveinsson had a separate meeting with Smt. Nirmla Sitharaman, Minister of State (Independent charge) for Commerce and Industry and had fruitful discussions on the ways of increasing the volume of bilateral trade and diversifying the trade basket between the two countries. The Ministers discussed the importance of reaching an early conclusion of the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement between India and the EFTA countries.

Foreign Minister Sveinsson is scheduled to visit Bangalore and Mumbai and is expected to meet with the leadership of Karnataka and Maharashtra to discuss mutual business opportunities.

The programme of the tourism delegation accompanying Foreign Minister Sveinsson includes presentations, in Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai, on Iceland as an attractive tourism destination.