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Friends,

A very good morning to you all. It is a great privilege to be invited to preside over a landmark event in TERI's annual calendar - the 19th Darbari Seth Memorial Lecture. The Ministry of External Affairs have a strong partnership with TERI and we work closely together in key domains of public policy. I am also particularly gratified to be here on an occasion that recognizes Darbari Seth, who can be accurately described as among the builders of modern India. It is, of course, only appropriate that the lecture in his honour is being delivered by none other than Mr. Antonio Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

For someone of my generation, Darbari Seth was a leading figure of the most prominent Indian business group, closely associated with the growth of our national industrial capabilities. Much of this story has been captured in a book very appropriately called "Salt of the Earth". Obviously, such a rich and productive career that spanned over half a century can hardly be summarised in a few words. But if one looks back at his celebrated achievements in Tata Chemicals, there are many learnings that are relevant today. For decades, Darbari Seth oversaw the creation of a sector that directly influenced the needs of the rural economy and the demands of the general consumer. While doing so, he was extremely conscious of the larger societal context. Indeed, it was the environmental aspect of this interest that propelled him to help establish TERI in 1974. Today, as we revisit the intersection of policy-making, entrepreneurship and social good in our quest for economic revival, he is an obvious inspiration

But there are other – perhaps even more important – lessons we can draw from Darbari Seth's life and times. Among the early challenges he successfully overcame was a drought in 1962 that threatened to shut down the Mithapur

township where Tata Chemicals was located. His innovative water conservation and substitution techniques established a reputation that only grew with time. A decade and a half later, a combination of ecological concerns, industrial efficiency and a preventive healthcare campaign helped to give birth to Tata Salt there. Darbari Seth is rightly credited with leading a science-driven Indian manufacturing company of scale and repute. But his life is much more than that: it is one of community commitment, national service and global ambition. And he achieved that by harmonizing entrepreneurship and innovation with environment and social good.

This interplay of the local, national and global remains at the centre of many public policy challenges. In fact, getting the balance right is the big debate of our times. Let us start with the importance of the local. Whether it is a problem or a resource, a situation or a culture, much of reality is actually local. Or certainly should be. That ability to remain rooted to the ground is more than physical; it is a mindset. It can arise from instinct, be developed through education and finally validated by experience. Applying to more than business or technology, it transcends the material domain. An immersion in the local is identity and culture as well. I stress this at a moment in the world when there are serious conversations underway on globalization. Any objective assessment of that phenomenon would highlight that the world has been ill-served by a 'one size fits all' approach. Whether it is condescending prescriptions given from afar or mass-produce that overwhelm local creativity, they infringe the very diversity that defines us. Today, we see a growing recognition of the value and importance of the local. It may be in handlooms and handicrafts, in arts and cuisine, or in livelihood and commerce. Being vocal for local is, in fact, a message that has a resonance much bigger than most of us imagine. And it is only the truly local thinking that will strive to ensure that the benefits of governance and development reach the very last person.

While the local is the ground reality, the nation remains the building block of the contemporary world. Among them, India is exceptional as one of the

civilizational societies that has spanned the ages. Although tested by empires, ideology and faith, the nation has proved an extraordinarily durable concept. It is today our most dominant identity and we accordingly assess our collective prospects in that light. To advance those, the focus is increasingly on our ability to improve human development indices and enhance comprehensive national power. Effectively achieving the agenda set out in the Sustainable Development Goals is the obvious pathway. And the national campaigns we have undertaken recently - whether it is *Jan Dhan Yojana* or *Jal Jeevan Mission*, *Ayushman Bharat* or *Beti padao*, *Beti bachao*, *Swachh Bharat Mission* or *Skill India*, *Digital India* or *Start Up India* -are aimed to do just that.

Strengthening our skill sets and creating a better enabling environment are the basis of a larger national capacity. And that is precisely what is the goal of the *Atmanirbhar Bharat* campaign. We need to be more self-generating and self-sustaining, drawing on greater national confidence and stronger societal commitment. Like the rest of the world, India too has been severely tested by the pandemic. But there is confidence in our ability to transform the challenge into opportunity. A large part of that would rest on policies that give primacy to employment generation, innovation and digitization. As the Prime Minister underlined on 15th August, we not only seek to Make in India, but to do so making for the world. Indeed, if India is to make a difference at the global level, it can only be through scaling up our capacities. While our domestic policies need to be promotional of rapid growth and greater manufacturing, our external ones too must ensure in parallel a level playing field for our producers.

In approaching the world, it is obviously important to emphasize that India remains global in its outlook, even more so now after the pandemic. This has been demonstrated repeatedly, whether it is in our medical assistance to 150 nations or humanitarian relief to those societies in distress. The current times, however, do provide an occasion to review the nature and terms of our external engagement. Economically, arrangements based on the template of others have naturally not worked in our favour. Thinking through the challenges we face on

the basis of our own interests is, therefore, very much the essence of *Atmanirbharta*. Livelihood and innovation should not be sacrificed at the altar of political fashion and commercial convenience. Believe me, our country has enough cards to play if we have the confidence to play them.

While all that will inevitably unfold, the time is also ripe for us to revisit the very concept of globalization. We have allowed it to be defined by the interests of a few, who visualize that process largely in financial, trade and travel terms. Real globalization can never be just an aggregate of transactions in these domains. It is an outcome of collaboration and indivisibility. The true challenges are more phenomena like terrorism, pandemics and climate change. These are the issues that will really test the seriousness of multilateralism.

Unfortunately, there are some who persuade themselves that they can draw the benefits while leaving the risks, threats, and challenges for others to deal with. This is predicated upon a false confidence that such problems can be localized in some regions of the planet, while others stay free from such contagion. As we have seen, this is not possible. If it took a heinous attack using passenger aircraft as weapons of mass destruction to underscore the age of terror, it has similarly taken a lethally contagious virus to trigger a pandemic that has brought the world to its knees.

Future historians will mark these as stand-out moments that disrupted the trajectory of human society. At the same time, there is another similarity: terrorism was not born on 9/11, nor has the Covid-19 been the only pandemic. We have long known intellectually that terrorism is a cancer that potentially affects everyone, just as pandemics potentially impact upon all humanity. And yet, in both cases, globalized focused responses to either challenge have tended to emerge only when there has been sufficient disruption created by a 'spectacular' event.

19 years from the tragedy of '9/11' and 12 years from our own '26/11', we have a range of mechanisms in place to contend with terrorism. These include the Financial Action Task Force, various UN Sanctions Committees and the Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate. But we still lack a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism, with the membership of the UN still wrestling with certain foundational principles. All the while, States that have turned the production of terrorists into a primary export have attempted, by dint of bland denials, to paint themselves as victims of terror.

But as we have seen last week, sustained pressure through international mechanisms to prevent the movement of funds for terror groups and their front agencies can work. It has eventually compelled a state complicit in aiding, abetting, training and directing terror groups and associated criminal syndicates to grudgingly acknowledge the presence of wanted terrorists and organized crime leaders on its territory. The struggle against terror and those who aid and abet it is a work in progress. It remains for the international system to create the necessary mechanisms to shut down the structures that support and enable terrorism, whether in South Asia or across the globe.

Similarly, we face a structural challenge in improving the international architecture that serves all of humanity in the fight against pandemics. We have seen precursors of this current crisis before. For most of the last century, humankind's luck has largely held out: either the sites of such outbreaks have been remote, or our monitoring systems have managed to head off a crisis in time. This time, however, the international warning systems, reporting protocols and response mechanisms were unable to prevent the spread beyond ground zero.

These examples have highlighted the need for both a more enlightened, more responsive multilateral system, and a new, inclusive and non-transactional approach to multilateralism; in short, reformed multilateralism. The reform of international organizations is not merely desirable but imperative. We need to

modernize the international system, step by step, to make it fit for purpose, beginning by making each entity relevant to the age in which we live, not when it was created. This requires revisiting membership and structures of control, re-orienting operational principles and rules, and rebuilding the resourcing channels of the key pillars of multilateralism.

When we look at the world's approach to climate change, the narrative has evolved significantly since the 1990s. At COP-21 in Paris in 2015, Prime Minister Modi stressed India's enhanced commitment in that regard. Subsequently, India demonstrated its will through its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), emerging as a leader in green energy transitions. We have set an ambitious goal of achieving a 40% level of reliance on non-fossil fuel power by 2030; in the near-term, we are to reach 175 giga watts (GW) of installed capacity in renewable power by 2022. This is a target we are close to achieving. We have also launched the world's largest program to make LED lighting affordable, with over 360 million LED bulbs distributed, saving 47 bn kilowatt/hours of electric power per year, and reducing 38 mn tonnes of CO₂. Urban transportation solutions are being implemented to expand mass transport in major urban centres, with an ambitious program of bringing in electric vehicles, and raising the bar on vehicle emission norms. And India's forest cover continues to increase, standing today at 24.3%, in addition to which we are committed to restore 26 mn hectares of degraded land by 2030.

Air and land apart, we are now implementing an equally ambitious plan to enhance access to clean water—ensuring piped water supply for every rural household by 2024--improving water-use efficiency, and increasing conservation of water to maximize the per-capita availability of water.

These examples of local actions will inevitably have global relevance. If a nation of over a billion people can achieve growth and development through sustainable means, it will help us collectively create favourable outcomes in an inclusive, non-transactional global process. At another level, if India can create

cost-effective and appropriate technological solutions, these can also be deployed rapidly, both at scale and at low cost, in other countries that face similar challenges.

It is in this spirit of local action for global outcomes that India and France worked together to create the International Solar Alliance, which has become a treaty-based organization that is open to all members of the UN. So far, some 67 countries have ratified the ISA Framework Agreement as on date. Through the ISA and our bilateral development partnerships, India is already working to enhance capacity in our neighbourhood, in Africa, Asia and Latin America, to deploy green technologies in support of development.

A similar approach underpins our Prime Minister's initiative, tabled at the last UNGA, to create a Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. Here too, we seek to script a cooperative approach to build resilience in infrastructure—transport, communication, buildings—across the globe, especially in geographies susceptible to natural disasters. The objective is to find best-in-class solutions that are readily deployable, scalable and affordable, so that the consequences and costs of managing natural and other disasters are mitigated substantially.

Let me stress that these examples show that commitment to a fairer and more inclusive multilateral goal need not obstruct a pragmatic course of action. Our initiatives in the complex and often contested discourse on climate change serve as a contrast to the unwillingness to take more practical, less ideological, action to combat terrorism. Greater practicality and non-selectivity would certainly strengthen multilateralism, especially as we enter a more multi-polar world. On its part, India has sought to prioritize and achieve concrete outcomes in different domains through practical cooperation. This is as evident in the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals as in efforts to develop diagnostic, therapeutic and vaccine solutions.

For all the challenges that the current pandemic has brought to our doorsteps, it has also refocused us on the international system that has coexisted for as long as we have been free nation. It is, in that sense, a unique moment for serious reflection on the state of the world order to which we have become accustomed. India enters the UN Security Council as an elected member in 2021, and joins the Troika of the G20 at almost the same time. There could be no better opportunity to work with all those who recognize the benefits of multilateralism and are prepared to contribute more to its reform.

An India that is weighing the balance between economic revival and global engagement would do well to recall Mahatma Gandhi's words: humankind is as much self-dependent as interdependent. I thank you for your attention.