

**Embassy of India
Beijing

Responding to COVID-19 as a Responsible Global Citizen

The Coronavirus pandemic has created a global crisis with no parallels in living memory. It has spread to every corner of the globe and has caused disruptions in every aspect of life. Nations around the world are being forced to deal simultaneously with a catastrophic health emergency and a massive economic shock. Whole societies have locked down and restricted activities as they struggle to contain the spread of the disease. The international community – with its interlinked economies and supply chains, its burgeoning network of global institutions and flow of people – is therefore facing a uniquely difficult governance challenge.

2. In this hour of crisis, Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed India's intention to be a responsible global citizen in interactions with world leaders, both in extraordinary virtual multilateral conferences and in bilateral conversations. This sentiment has been echoed by the External Affairs Minister, Dr S Jaishankar, in conversations with his ministerial colleagues from all regions. This far-sighted view to be a responsible member of the international community is guided by our civilizational ethos that places humanity at the centre of global prosperity and cooperation. We believe that this human-centric view will also stand the world in good stead in a post-pandemic world.

The World's Pharmacy

3. India's role as a "pharmacy of the world" has come into sharp focus during this crisis. Our world-class pharmaceutical industry is the producer of choice for critical medications with brand recognition in all geographies and markets. The COVID-19 pandemic has produced an explosion in demand for drugs such as Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and Paracetamol, and India has been able to gift as well as commercially supply large volumes of these drugs to consumers across the world while also ensuring adequate domestic stockpiles. Our close neighbours in the region, including Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Seychelles and Mauritius were the first beneficiaries of our support, which has been subsequently extended to developing partner countries in Africa, Middle East, Central Asia, as well as South America and the Caribbean. By now we have exported more than a billion HCQ and Paracetamol tablets to more than a hundred countries. Other essential lifesaving drugs, antibiotics, medical consumables, laboratory and hospital equipment also continue to be supplied to a number of countries.

4. Fulfilling our role as a responsible citizen of the global comity of nations extends beyond the supply of these drugs. Requests made to us for deployment of

Rapid Response Teams (RRT) of medical professionals have been responded to promptly. RRTs comprising doctors, nurses and paramedics have already been deployed in Maldives and Kuwait at the request of their governments. Even though the lockdowns in various countries have made the logistics of this humanitarian relief operation extremely complex, a mixture of innovative means are being used to ensure their delivery.

Making Good on the Promise of Being a Net Provider of Health Security

5. India is thus making every effort to make good its intention to be a net provider of health security on a global scale. While enhancing its reputation as the “pharmacy of the world”, it is also making its medical and public health expertise and capacity available to the entire South Asian region. Following a video conference of leader of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Countries held at PM Modi’s initiative on 15 March 2020, a number of projects have been launched. A COVID-19 Emergency Fund, based on voluntary contributions, has been created, for which India has made US\$10 million available. Other SAARC nations have also made generous contributions. A video conference of health professionals representing all SAARC countries was held on 26 March 2020, and a contact group of doctors from participating countries has been created for real time experience sharing on issues such as patient management, testing, and disease surveillance.

6. India has also leveraged its strengths in the digital and information technology space to develop a ‘SAARC COVID19 Information Exchange Platform (COINEX)’ platform for use by all SAARC countries to facilitate the exchange of specialized information and tools on COVID-19 virus among designated health professionals in the region. India will also offer online training resources and modules on this platform on the relevant epidemic prevention topics.

Protecting the Interests of a Global Citizenry

7. Last but not the least, India is also managing a massive incoming and outgoing evacuation exercise. Outgoing evacuations of more than 58,000 foreign nationals from multiple locations in India to 72 countries have been facilitated. During the early stages of the crisis, Government of India had evacuated 2465 Indian nationals and 48 foreigners from China, Iran, Japan and Italy under very difficult circumstances in specially arranged flights. Another 1609 stranded Indian citizens were repatriated from Malaysia, Singapore, Netherlands and France with the help of commercial flights.

8. Presently, Mission Vande Bharat is underway. This is a worldwide exercise to assist Indian nationals stranded overseas to return home. In its initial phase, 64 flights are being operated to bring back Indians from 12 countries. Flights and ships ferrying stranded Indians from both our immediate and extended neighbourhood

have already reached different parts of the world, with the scope of operations set to expand to cover even more regions in the days ahead. This also opens up opportunities for foreign nationals stranded in India to avail these arrangements to return to their home countries. We have approached this serious and complex task with sincerity, responding with innovations and with a coordinated effort to overcome the limitations imposed by the global lockdown. As we deal with these immediate requirements and invest in present and future relationships, India's unremitting spirit towards fulfilling our responsibilities as a global citizen will be our guiding light and the timeless message of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family) will be our refrain.

Beijing

13 May 2020