

INDIA'S PRESIDENCY IN UNSC

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INDIA AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNSC

India's two-years tenure as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council began on January 1, 2021. Apart from the five permanent members, the UNSC also includes 10 non-permanent members who are each chosen for a two-year term. In June last year, India made the cut after securing 184 votes in the 193-member General Assembly for the 2021-22 term. Apart from India, the nine other non-permanent members at present are Tunisia, Vietnam, Estonia, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Niger, Norway and St Vincent and the Grenadines.

India took over the Presidency of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on August 1 and hosted signature events in three major areas of maritime security, peacekeeping and counterterrorism. India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador T S Tirumurti stated that it is a singular honour for India to be presiding over the Security Council the same month when it is celebrating its 75th Independence Day. India will again preside over the Council in December next year, the last month of its two-year tenure.

Since the establishment of the United Nations Security Council in 1945, India has held the two-year term as a non-permanent member in the years 1950–51, 1967–68, 1972–73, 1977–78, 1984–85, 1991–92, and 2011–12. As to the presidency itself, this is India's tenth tenure as the Council President. During India's past presidencies, it has discussed various arenas of issues to maintain peace and security in the international realm.

Highlights of major activities under India's presidency at the UNSC

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended and chaired the High-Level Open Debate on “Enhancing Maritime Security: A Case For International Cooperation”. He was the first Indian PM to chair an UNSC meeting. In the meeting he said that at present this shared maritime heritage is facing many challenges. He highlighted various issues regarding maritime security as he mentioned about how sea routes are being misused for piracy and terrorism. He also mentioned maritime disputes between many countries and climate change and natural disasters related issues. In this broad context, he called for a framework of mutual understanding and cooperation for the preservation and use of common maritime heritage.
- External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar visited New York during India's Presidency of the United Nations Security Council and presided over two high-level signature events on August 18 and 19. The first event on August 18, 2021 was an Open Debate on 'Protecting the Protectors: Technology and Peacekeeping' while the second event on August 19, 2021 was high-level Briefing on 'Threats to International Peace and Security caused by Terrorist Acts'.
- The External Affairs Minister of India Dr.S Jaishankar attended the UNSC Briefing on 'Threats to International Peace and Security caused by Terrorist Acts'. He called for commemorating the 4th International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to Victims of Terrorism day. He stated that India has its fair share of challenges and casualties in regards to terrorism. He clarified India's position regarding global terrorism and stated that there cannot be any exception or any justification for any act of terrorism, regardless of motivations behind such acts. He said that India also recognized that the menace of terrorism cannot be and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or any ethnic group.
- The External Affairs Minister of India Dr. S Jaishankar also attended the open debate on Technology & Peacekeeping. There he stated that 21st century peacekeeping must be anchored in a strong ecosystem of technology and innovation that can facilitate UN peacekeeping operations in implementing their mandates in complex environments. Such a change will help them to adapt to changing conflict dynamics and take advantage of increased efficiencies.
- The Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla was present at the UNSC meeting on the Middle East Peace Process on August 30, 2021. He stated that India is

concerned by the recent escalation in the Gaza Strip, which once again underscores the fragility of the ceasefire. There is an urgent need for addressing the underlying causes that have triggered the escalation. He spoke of India's call for regular and predictable transfer of aid and other essential items to Gaza to ease the humanitarian situation and facilitate early reconstruction. India also asked for the international donor community supports for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip through the Palestinian Authority.

- On 6th August a Security Council press statement was issued by Council President Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti on Terrorist Attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the cowardly terrorist attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan, on 14 July 2021, which resulted in the deaths of nine Chinese nationals and three Pakistanis and many injured. The members of the Security Council expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Governments of Pakistan and China, and they wished a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured.
- The Security Council also debated on the recent crisis in Afghanistan. The members of the Security Council called for an immediate end to the violence in Afghanistan, the restoration of security, civil and constitutional order, and urgent talks to resolve the current crisis of authority in the country and to arrive at a peaceful settlement through an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned process of national reconciliation. They underscored that a sustainable end to the conflict in Afghanistan can only be achieved through an inclusive, just, durable and realistic political settlement that upholds human rights, including for women, children and minorities. The members of the Security Council called on parties to adhere to international norms and standards on human rights and put an end to all abuses and violations in this regard.
- On 19th August a Security Council press statement was issued by Council President Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States countering the threat. The members of the Security Council noted with deep concern that ISIL (Da'esh) and other terrorist groups continue to exploit, both online and offline, the disruption, grievances and development setbacks linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, as reflected in the thirteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security.

Major Issues Discussed during India's presidency

The outcomes of meetings at the UNSC are divided into 'resolutions', which are binding and require nine out of fifteen votes, and no veto from the P5 for adoption, and 'presidential statements', which need consensus and endorsement of all 15 members of the UNSC. Last August India issued several resolutions and presidential statements of international relevance. Apart from that several primary issues which have been discussed in the month of August are as follows,

- The UNSC meeting on the Middle East Peace Process
- The UNSC meeting on 'Threats to International Peace and Security caused by Terrorist Acts'
- The UN Security Council Open Debate on Technology & Peacekeeping
- The UNSC High-Level Open Debate on "Enhancing Maritime Security: A Case For International Cooperation"

Major Achievements for India

- **One step forwards towards Maritime Security**

Maritime security is being undermined at an alarming pace by challenges around contested boundaries, the depletion of natural resources and armed attacks from piracy to terrorism. India has recognized the fact that the ocean is a joint heritage and sea routes are the lifeline of international trade. Thus a coherent discussion was the need of the hour to address the issue. Therefore the UNSC under the presidency of India organised an open debate on the issue which was chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. To address the concern PM Modi ideated four principles to maritime security, they are as follows,

- First principle is to remove barriers from legitimate maritime trade. The prosperity of all depends on the active flow of maritime trade. The hurdles could be a challenge for the entire global economy.
- Second principle is about the settlement of maritime disputes which must be peaceful and on the basis of international law only. This is very important for mutual trust and confidence.
- Third principle is that People must face natural disasters and maritime threats created by Non-state actors together. India has initiated several steps to enhance regional cooperation on this subject.

- Fourth principle is that the countries have to preserve the maritime environment and maritime resources. The oceans have a direct impact on the climate. And therefore, we have to keep the maritime environment free from pollution like plastics and oil spills.
- Fifth Principle is that the countries must encourage responsible maritime connectivity. It is clear that infrastructure creation is necessary to increase maritime trade.

Shortly after Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for the removal of barriers from maritime trade at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Russian President Vladimir Putin thanked India for the meeting on the agenda and called for a united effort to achieve success in the maritime domain. The Russian President added that Moscow is doing a lot to preserve and strengthen the international legal order in maritime security and is ready to share its experience in anti-terrorist operations, crime prevention, detection & neutralisation of bandit formations, including in maritime areas. President Vladimir Putin called for establishing a special structure within the UN system that would directly deal with the issue of fighting maritime crimes in various regions during his address to the high-level UNSC debate chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

- **Taking lead against Terror**

The UNSC organised a briefing on 'Threats to International Peace and Security caused by Terrorist Acts' which was attended by the External Affairs Minister of India Dr. S Jaishankar. He called for commemorating the 4th International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to Victims of Terrorism day. He stated that India has its fair share of challenges and casualties in regards to terrorism. He clarified India's position regarding global terrorism and stated that there cannot be any exception or any justification for any act of terrorism, regardless of motivations behind such acts. He said that India also recognized that the menace of terrorism cannot be and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or any ethnic group. He also mentioned the latest report of the Secretary General which has provided another stark reminder to all of us that ISIL (Daesh) continues to pose a critical threat to international peace and security. ISIL (Daesh) remains active in Syria and Iraq and its affiliates are growing in strength, particularly as we heard from briefers, in Africa. The financial resource mobilization of ISIL (Daesh) has become more robust. In India's immediate neighbourhood, ISIL-Khorasan (ISIL-K) has become more energetic and is constantly seeking to expand its footprint. Events unfolding in Afghanistan have naturally enhanced global concerns about their implications for both regional and international security. The heightened activities of the proscribed Haqqani Network justifies this growing anxiety. Whether it is in Afghanistan or against India, groups like Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed continue to operate with both impunity and encouragement. The EAM

proposed an eight-point action plan against terrorism for consideration. Its cardinal principles are as follows:

- Summon the political will: don't justify terrorism, don't glorify terrorists,
- No double standards. Terrorists are terrorists; distinctions are made only at our own peril,
- Don't place blocks and holds on listing requests without any reason,
- Discourage exclusivist thinking and be on guard against new terminologies and false priorities,
- Enlist and delist objectively, not on political or religious considerations,
- Recognize the linkage to organized crime,
- Support and strengthen the FATF, and
- Provide greater funding to the UN Office of Counter Terrorism.

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- **Advancing Peace in the Middle East**

The UNSC took the issue of the recent escalation in the Gaza Strip, which once again underscores the fragility of the ceasefire and the urgent need for addressing the underlying causes that have triggered the escalation. The Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla was present at the UNSC meeting on the Middle East Peace Process. He spoke of India's call for regular and predictable transfer of aid and other essential items to Gaza to ease the humanitarian situation and facilitate early reconstruction. India also asked for the international donor community supports for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip through the Palestinian Authority. India took note of the incremental relaxation of restrictions for entry of commodities into the Gaza Strip and urged the parties to work together to ensure timely access to such relief for the Palestinians. According to the Foreign Secretary this would create conditions which will help in preventing another round of escalation. The recent agreement for the resumption of cash assistance to needy Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip is an

important development as it would provide much needed relief for these families. India appreciates the work of agencies like OCHA, UNRWA, WFP to ensure delivery of critical aid to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. He further mentioned that amidst these concerns, the decision by Israel to increase the number of work permits issued to Palestinians will help strengthen both the Palestinian and Israeli economies. He asserted that India welcomed all measures which create greater opportunities for the socio-economic development of the Palestinian people. India's development cooperation with Palestine is also geared towards this objective.

- **Balancing the Pandemic and Global Affairs**

India's Presidency at the UNSC has shown how to address critical global concerns in the situation of pandemic. While describing the agenda of the UNSC in the month of August, the Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador TS Tirumurti mentioned that the UNSC would also have on its agenda several important meetings on issues regarding Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, and the Middle East. Due to pandemic a lot of issues of global influence have been overlooked but India tried to address issues like threats of terrorism, sexual and gender based violence during armed conflict, women's rights in emerging democracies, disarmament in this presidential tenure. India tried to revive the relevance of these issues in the situation of pandemic which is praiseworthy.

- **Reviving Peacekeeping through Technology**

India is one of the founding members of the UN, having signed the Washington Declaration on 1st January, 1942 and having also participated at the San Francisco Conference from 25th April to 26th June, 1945. Indian leadership even before Independence emphasised India's commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN and underlined India's determination to contribute to international peace and security, including and particularly in the field of peacekeeping. It is not avoidable that 21st century peacekeeping must be anchored in a strong ecosystem of technology and innovation that can facilitate UN peacekeeping operations in implementing their mandates in complex environments. This is also in line with the Strategy for Digital Transformation of UN Peacekeeping which seeks to advance the use of technology across the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) themes, including performance, safety and security, politics, protection and peacebuilding. Peacekeeping missions must be able to move fast to acquire and validate information from a wide range of openly available sources to enhance situational awareness, augment security, aid operational planning, and support decision-

making. Therefore under India's presidency the UNSC recognized the fact that UN peacekeeping simply cannot afford to cede the information advantage to those actors determined to undermine prospects for peace by using modern technology to aid their violent cause. The proposal pointed out by India was as follows:

- First, it must focus on operationally proven, cost-effective, widely available, reliable and field-serviceable technologies.
- Second, it needs a sound information and intelligence foundation, only this will ensure early warning and mobilizing a coherent and early response.
- Thirdly, it must contribute to ensuring that technological improvements are continuous and are available on the ground, in the gear that peacekeepers carry and the weapons and tools that they use to enhance their mobility, performance, endurance, range, and load-carrying capabilities while guaranteeing their safety and security.
- Fourthly, consistent training and capacity building of peacekeepers in the realm of technology needs attention and investment.

- **On the Afghan issue**

The United Nations Security Council, under the current Presidency of India, on August 30, 2021, adopted a resolution on the situation in Afghanistan, demanding that the war-torn country not be used to threaten or attack any nation or shelter terrorists. The resolution was put forward by the US, the UK, France. It was adopted after 13 Council members voted in favour, while permanent members Russia and China abstained from the voting. The resolution demands that Afghan territory at no cost be used to threaten or attack any other country or to shelter or train terrorists. According to official sources stated in The Hindu, the resolution, which called on the Taliban to keep its commitments on preventing terror groups in Afghanistan and urged them to assist the safe evacuations of all Afghan nationals wishing to leave the country, was the result of careful coordination and high-level official contacts with UNSC members, including a call to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and the efforts were overseen by a special new group led by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval.

The Resolution demanded that Afghan territory not be used to threaten or attack any country or to shelter and train terrorists and plan or finance terrorist attacks. It specifically mentions individuals designated by the UNSC resolution 1267 which includes the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM).

Russia and abstained China from voting. In their statements Russia and China said they wanted all the groups, especially Islamic State (ISIL) and the Uighur East Turkestan Islamic Movement

(ETIM) be named specifically in the document. China's U.N. Ambassador Gueng Shang also complained that the resolution was not "balanced" and had been "forcefully pushed" through. Even so, neither country vetoed the resolution.

India is expected to chair the 1988 Sanctions committee that looks at Taliban sanctions next and participate in the decision to extend the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), where it will also have to balance competing demands from the U.S., the U.K. and France bloc ranged against Russia and China.

- **Promotion of Foreign Policy Goal**

India's foreign policy has been geared up to be flexible as well as pragmatic so as to make quick adjustments to respond to evolving situations. India's diplomatic engagements have been proactive to respond to any global crisis since the country's independence. In the recent past with the emergence of India as an economic powerhouse and stable democracy the country has enhanced its international cooperation in a more zestful manner. In the recent engagement of India as the president of the UNSC the country has shown how to balance between its foreign policy ideals and the emerging global crisis at the same time. It can be seen that the implementation of its foreign policy India, invariably adheres to a set of basic principles on which no compromise is made. India advocates the policy of constructive engagement over aggression. It believes that violent retaliation and confrontation can only complicate matters. It strongly believes in and supports democracy. Such values are reflected in the UNSC when India was dealing with the Afghan crisis and the Middle East Peace Process last month.

India advocates a global debate and global consensus on issues of global dimensions, terrorism is one of such issues. Campaign against International terrorism remains high on the agenda of the Indian government which was also reflected during the debate over terrorism last month.

- **India's credentials for being a permanent member of UNSC**

In the run-up to India taking over the UNSC presidency, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said that the country would make the best of its two-year term as a UNSC member to establish its credentials for being a permanent member. "We will make the best of our two-year term in the Security Council. We will leave our mark in the Council and our point is to say that India really, by its contribution, establishes the right to be a permanent member of UN Security Council," he said. India's bid for a permanent UNSC seat has received backing from successive US Presidents going back at least to George W Bush and including his successors Barack Obama and Donald Trump. Joe Biden, who succeeded Trump, had in his campaign policy

document last year talked about supporting India as a permanent member. The UK, France and Russia, too, are known to back India's bid but the biggest stumbling block in that regard is China, which has reportedly been using its veto to block India's elevation as a permanent UNSC member.

Permanent membership of the Security Council is an important and legitimate aspiration for India in order to play its rightful role in the maintenance of international peace and security. Former Indian Permanent Representative, Ambassador S Akbaruddin, stressed the urgent need to reform the Council to be able to more effectively address human suffering and global security threats. He stated that Global governance structures had to be updated and adjusted to be able to deal with new security challenges. He noted that the lack of broad representation in the membership of Council added to its lack of legitimacy and credibility.

Global Response

After the successful presidential tenure, India is being praised by the world powers.

- France lauded efforts taken by India at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Showering accolades on the PM Modi-led administration, French ambassador to India Emmanuel Lenain said that India's leadership in the council has contributed significantly and helped steer the council's response to the crisis in Afghanistan and the South China Sea. In a tweet, he also mentioned that France will continue to "work closely" with India at the UNSC.
- Shortly after Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for the removal of barriers from maritime trade at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Russian President Vladimir Putin thanked India for the meeting on the agenda and called for a united effort to achieve success in the maritime domain. The Russian President added that Moscow is doing a lot to preserve and strengthen the international legal order in maritime security and is ready to share its experience in anti-terrorist operations, crime prevention, detection & neutralisation of bandit formations, including in maritime areas. President Vladimir Putin called for establishing a special structure within the UN system that would directly deal with the issue of fighting maritime crimes in various regions during his address to the high-level UNSC debate chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- As soon as India took over the presidency, the Russian ambassador Nikolay Kudashev lauded New Delhi for deciding on an agenda "which embraces pressing global issues including maritime security, peacekeeping & counter-terrorism".

- US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield congratulated India for a successful presidency of the UN Security Council for the month of August. "Your leadership and resilience saw us through many challenging issues -- especially the situation in Afghanistan," she said.
- Brazil also extended its warm congratulations to the whole team of India in New York after the completion of its presidency. Brazil's Mission to the UN said as an incoming Council member, they look forward to working together next year.
- Permanent Representative of Qatar to the UN Ambassador Alya Ahmed Saif Al Thani and UAE Mission to the UN congratulated India for the successful presidency of the UNSC during August.

Conclusion

As one of the founding members, India views the UN as a forum that could play a crucial role to guarantee and maintain international peace and security. Its quest for strengthening peace and security has not been an easy one with new and emerging challenges, some of which have been outlined above. In the recent pandemic times, India has once again effectively worked with other partners to strengthen the UN system to combat new global challenges such as terrorism, pandemic, piracy, disarmament, human rights, peace building and peace keeping. India is also proactively pursuing a vigorous multi-lateral agenda, at a time when the world is facing these new challenges, based on its national security templates. In doing so, India is aware that its decisions in these areas have a major global impact as is normal in a globally interlinked world. In its pursuit of international peace and security, India is fully aware that the strengthening of multilateralism through the United Nations represents the best hope in a troubled world with new and emerging threats.

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Resolutions Adopted by UNSC during India's Presidency

- The Security Council Extended Somalia Mission Mandate until 31 May 2022(Adopted Resolution 2592,2021)
- The Security Council Extended Mandate of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon for One Year (Adopted Resolution 2591, 2021)
- The Security Council Renewed Mali Sanctions and emphasised on Panel of Experts Monitoring Implementation (Adopted Resolution 2590, 2021)
- The Security Council debated on Famine-Like Conditions' in Ethiopia's Tigray Region,
- The Security Council debated on Transparency and Accountability issues on upcoming iraqi elections and called for reforms
- The Security Council debated on Escalating Conflict, Deepening Economic Crisis in Syria which has pushed humanitarian needs to highest levels since start of conflict
- The Security Council discussed the crisis in Yemen as Fighting Near Ma'rib escalated and amplified Humanitarian Needs.
- The Security Council Committee discussed issues concerning Sudan and considered Interim Report of Its Panel of Experts
- The Security Council issued Press Statement on ISIL/Da'esh
- The Security Council called on Governments to Protect Peacekeepers, Requests Creation of Online Database Cataloguing Attacks, (Adopted Resolution 2589, 2021)
- The security council issued Presidential Statement over Dire Situation in West Africa, Sahel, Gulf of Guinea
- The Security Council issued Press Statement on Afghanistan
- The Security Council 2127 Committee met Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict
- The Security Council debated on Women's Quota one of the crucial Election Plans in Somalia
- The Security Council 2140 Committee briefed about Children and Armed Conflict
- The Security Council 1533 Committee met Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict
- The security council issued Presidential Statement on the importance of Maritime Safety, Safeguarding Oceans for Legitimate Use
- The Security Council issued Press Statement on Terrorist Attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
- The Security Council 2374 Committee considered Final Report of Panel of Experts on Mali
- The Security Council debated on Syria and Chemical Weapons Convention Obligations and Security Council as Members Urge Greater Transparency
- The Security Council Sanctions Committee concerned Central African Republic Convenes Meeting with Regional States in Connection with Final Report of Panel of Experts
- The Security Council issued Press Statement on Escalating Violence in Afghanistan
- The Security Council adopted Presidential Statement Recognizing Progress to Advance Peace, Security in Darfur Following Hybrid Operation Drawdown