

Thank you Excellency Mr. Soren Gade. I would first of all like to thank the European Parliament for this opportunity. I am also happy to be joining my colleagues from Australia and Japan.

2. As one of the first countries to embrace the concept of Indo-Pacific, India is extremely pleased to see the concept gaining wider acceptance. The recent announcement of the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy has been particularly welcomed in India not least because of the strong convergence in the values and principles enunciated in the EU's strategy with that of the Indian one. In our view, the EU can make an enormous contribution to the shaping of world affairs in general and to the Indo-Pacific in particular. With its high reputation and considerable capabilities, the EU can play and should play an important role in the emergence of a multipolar world. And if such a multipolar world becomes a reality, our collective effort in the Indo-Pacific region would be a key determinant.

3. Our approach to the Indo-Pacific is rooted in our belief in international law, freedom of navigation and overflight, sustainable development, protection of the environment, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and open, free, fair and mutually beneficial trade and investment system.

4. India envisages a free, open, inclusive, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific built on a rules-based order and with sustainable and transparent infrastructure investment. Our vision for the Indo-Pacific is a positive one, it is inclusive of all nations, and ASEAN unity and centrality is one of its important elements.

5. Our approach has also been to utilize the bilateral relationships as well as emerging plurilateral forums such as the QUAD and existing multilateral mechanisms for the implementation of our vision. Particular reference in this context can be made of the East-Asia Summit, ASEAN and its structures such as the ARF and ADMM plus, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, Indian Ocean Rim Association etc.

6. More recently India has announced an Indo-Pacific Ocean's Initiative (IPOI) and invited like-minded countries to join this initiative. The initiative establishes 7 pillars: maritime security; maritime ecology; maritime resources; capacity building and resource sharing; disaster risk reduction and management; science, technology and academic cooperation; and trade, connectivity and maritime transport. We are happy that France, Australia, Indonesia and Japan have

agreed to chair one pillar each. We have also invited and look forward to similar participation by the EU and its Member States. An invitation in this regard was extended by our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at the India-EU Leaders' meeting in May last year.

7. As would be evident from what I have stated, there are strong similarities in the Indian and the EU vision for the Indo-Pacific. This was clearly evident during the India-EU Leaders' summit between our Prime Minister and the Heads of States and Governments of all the 27 EU Member States last year in May. We were also happy that our External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar was invited to the informal meeting of the EU Foreign Ministers to discuss the Indo-Pacific in September last year. The External Affairs Minister was also one of the speakers at the recently held EU Ministerial Forum on Indo-Pacific held in Paris. There are clear indications in these meetings that economic and political interests in the Indo-Pacific are increasingly inseparable. And this therefore requires an integrated approach and for leveraging one to the benefit of the other.

8. Our ongoing cooperation with the EU also reflects many of the commonalities in our approaches to the Indo-Pacific. We have now instituted a Maritime Security Dialogue between India and the EU, and the second meeting of the Dialogue took place last month. We have been closely working with EU NAVFOR and we witnessed the first ever India-EU Joint Naval Exercises in the Gulf of Aden in June last year. There are obvious opportunities for cooperation within the EU's CRIMARIO and ESIWA projects. Our respective fusion centres in the region are also sharing information to raise the level of maritime domain awareness in the region.

9. The announcement of the EU's Global Gateway has also opened new vistas. As you may be aware, India and the EU announced a connectivity partnership following the India-EU Leaders' Meeting last year. The partnership outlines our shared vision and principles that must guide our connectivity and infrastructure projects including in the Indo-Pacific region. It focusses on cooperation in energy, digital, transport and people to people contacts. Going beyond bilateral cooperation, it also envisages India and the EU cooperating in implementing projects in third countries. This is an area of particular promise and first steps in this regard were taken when India and the EU had their first ever consultations on Africa earlier this month. We also envisage a number of workshops and promotional events in the coming months to take forward this partnership.

10. Before I conclude, I would like to add a few words about the QUAD. As far as we are concerned, we see the QUAD as based on shared interests and concerns and common values of the 4 participating countries. It is also based on an understanding that no country in the world today alone has the ability to address the big global challenges, and therefore cooperation among like-minded partners is the need of the hour. The QUAD is engaged in a much broader range of cooperation than what is often attributed to it. For example, under the QUAD vaccine Initiative, India is producing vaccines, based on the US IPR, and funded and logistically supported by Japan and Australia. Similarly, cooperation is being pursued on issues like climate change, decarbonisation efforts in port and shipping operations, and deployment of clean hydrogen technology. Other issues such as ensuring reliable supply chains, and critical emerging technologies like AI, 5G, 6G, etc., are also part of the QUAD.

11. Let me clarify that the QUAD is based on a positive agenda and any attempt to describe it as anything else, such as an “Asian NATO” is motivated and hugely misplaced. As our External Affairs Minister has stated recently, the QUAD can best be described as a 21<sup>st</sup> century way of responding to a diversified, dispersed and constantly evolving global scenario.

12. I would like to stop here. I thank once again the MEPs present here and the European Parliament for the invitation. I look forward to the interactive session.