

# I can assure you that while sending your students to India such concerns may not be relevant : Vilasrao Deshmukh

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The 1st India-Africa S&T Ministers' Conference and Tech Expo got off to a business-like start today with Shri Vilasrao Deshmukh, Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, reiterating the commitments of Government of India to the declarations of India-Africa Summits and outlined a five-fold agenda to pave the way for a concrete roadmap of cooperation in science, technology and innovation with African countries. The two-day Conference and Tech Expo is organized jointly by the Ministry of Science and Technology (Department of Science & Technology) and Ministry of External Affairs (Government of India) and FICCI. The Minister said that facilitation of India-Africa interaction at a higher level could built around the following five areas: • Visits of expert delegations from India to African countries for identification of an initial set of potential sectors for collaboration and technology transfer; • Organization of joint workshops, technology expos and road shows for requirement assessment and feasibility studies; • Identification of agencies that can provide technologies for transfer to African countries; • Development of appropriate linkages between industry associations and SMEs; and • Facilitating technology transfer and establishment of pilot scale demonstration plants in Africa The Minister observed that the Indian IT sector is in a growth phase. The infrastructure of our laboratories is being strengthened. Most of India's R&D and academic institutions are now actively engaged with international collaborations which allow mobility of students and researchers. "I see here an opportunity for science and engineering students at the Masters and PhD levels from Africa to undertake student internships in Indian research institutions. Through this exposure we can connect young scientists and build bridges between next generations. While brain drain to other developed countries may be an issue for developing economies, I can assure you that while sending your students to India such concerns may not be relevant," Mr. Deshmukh said. He said technology transfer and adoption is the central theme of the India-Africa S&T partnership . "Some for the Indian home grown technologies and innovations which are frugal and affordable could easily touch the lives of the untouched people in both Indian and Africa. Affordable innovations and traditional knowledge sectors could form the wings of Indo-Africa partnership," he said. Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Preneet Kaur, Minister of State for External Affairs, stated, "In a demonstration of India's continued commitment in Africa, India has successfully implemented the pan-African e-Network Project, including tele-education, tele-medicine and connectivity between leaders in 47 African countries. An agreement has also been signed for its implementation in the 48th country, South Sudan, recently. Dr. (Ms.) Nadia Eskander Zakhary, Minister of Scientific Research of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Chair of the African Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology, informed the delegates that 2010-20 has been declared as the "Decade for Africa". "The challenge for the African nations was to plan, unite and engage in strategic efforts for the betterment of the people," she said and urged her Indian colleagues to support Africa's S&T initiatives for the sake of future generations. Dr. Ashwani Kumar, Minister of State for Science & Technology and Planning, Government of India, pointed out that India remains committed capacity building in the HRD sector in Africa. "India", he said, " proposes to establish several new institutions at the pan-African level, including an India-Africa Food Processing Cluster, India-Africa Integrated Textiles Cluster, India-Africa Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting." The latter, she said, would harness satellite

technology for the agriculture and fisheries sectors as well as contribute towards disaster preparedness and management of natural resources. "We have received a request to support the establishment of an India-pan-Africa University for Life and Earth Sciences in Nigeria and would be happy to support this important venture," he added. Prof. Jean Pierre O Ezin, Commissioner, Human Resources, Science & Technology, African Union Commission, in his address, said that science and technology was today an important component of the political agenda in Africa. He expressed confidence that the conference would help create a long term strategic partnership in ways that would touch the lives of the people in the two regions. Dr. T. Ramasami, Secretary , Department of Science & Technology, Government of India, said that science, technology and innovation was an important bridge connecting India and Africa through living relationships. For building the next frontier in S&T cooperation, the focus would be on capacity building, S&T for development, knowledge and adoption and research areas of mutual interest. Shri R. V. Kanoria, President, FICCI, informed the delegates that discussions were at an advanced stage with some African nations to launch the DRD-FICCI technology commercialization programmes in Africa. The proposed programmes, notably in Senegal and Rwanda, aim at taking relevant Indian technologies to Africa with the mutually beneficial goal of strengthening industry while providing new international markets for Indian innovations.

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