

## **Ambassador's Remarks at the event "India-Kuwait Joint Fight against COVID-19 – Thank You Kuwait"**

**Kuwait, July 29, 2021**

His Excellency Ambassador Ali Sulaiman Al-Saeed, Assistant Foreign Minister, Asia Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Kuwait

His Excellency Mr. Abdulkarim Taqi, Director General, Public Authority of Industry, State of Kuwait

His Excellency Sheikh Yousef Abdullah Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Director General, Kuwait Ports Authority

His Excellency Minister Plenipotentiary Nasser Sabeeh Al-Sabeeh, Assistant Foreign Minister for Development & International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Kuwait

His Excellency Mr. Jamal Hadhel Al-Jalawi, Director General, Directorate General of Customs, State of Kuwait

His Excellency Engineer Yousef Sulaiman Al Fouzan, Director General of Civil Aviation, State of Kuwait

His Excellency Mr. Anwar Al-Hasawi, Deputy Chairman, Kuwait Red Crescent Society

Esteemed dignitaries, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good Afternoon to you all.

Welcome to Embassy of India.

Let me begin my remarks today by thanking His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait and His Highness Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince, for hosting the large Indian community in Kuwait and for looking after our community during the Covid 19 pandemic.

I welcome all the dignitaries and friends of India who have joined us today here physically and virtually. Today's event is in a way a celebration of the vibrant and dynamic partnership between our two friendly countries, India and Kuwait. This is a partnership that has not only stood the test of time but has grown from strength to strength over time and has now blossomed into a multifaceted mutually enriching, forward looking dynamic partnership. This is no wonder for us as our bilateral relations have been built on a very

sound, solid and deep-rooted foundation of exceptionally close and strong people to people ties. Our forefathers have built and nurtured this relationship on the basis of mutual trust and respect. I am confident that this relationship will continue to prosper and evolve into a new age, New India-New Kuwait partnership connecting the visions of the leadership of our two friendly countries for mutual development and progress of the peoples of our two countries.

Today's event is also an opportunity for us to reaffirm our commitment to jointly fight this devastating Covid 19 pandemic. As we stand here today, it appears that the global battle against this deadly pandemic is likely to be a protracted one. We have made significant progress with COVID-19 vaccinations around the world. In India, we are successfully conducting the world's largest COVID-19 vaccination programme with over 450 million vaccinated till date in a record time. In addition to COVISHIELD, which is Astra Zeneca/Oxford vaccine, India has developed its own indigenous vaccine "COVAXIN", marking yet another significant achievement from India's world reputed Pharma Industry. However, we still have a long way to go until each one of us is vaccinated and perhaps need to take even booster shots every year as we do with flu shots. It is thereby imperative that we do not relent in our efforts. The "new normal" forced on us by COVID-19 is here to stay; we just need to adapt to it.

I am also pleased to inform you all that India has acted and continues to act with resolve during this unprecedented crisis. In India, the rate of spread of infections, the number of fatalities and the number of cases requiring hospitalisation and critical care have all shown a consistent decline in recent weeks. India's recovery rate is over 97%, which is higher than global averages. India's fatality rate is 1.3 % which is much below the world average. A whole-country, whole-government approach has helped overcome both the phases of peak infections in India. Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi regularly address the State Governments and the people directly launching various programs aimed at taking this 'whole India effort' forward.

Today, the Government is also taking all measures to prevent a potential third wave. Health infrastructure is also being ramped up as a precautionary measure. India's technological prowess is being leveraged to deliver much needed healthcare solutions. The Co-WIN application, which forms the technology backbone of the vaccination programme in India, is an example of the success of Digital India. While India implements these

innovative solutions to combat the global pandemic, it keeps the needs of the international community at the center of its concerted efforts. The CO-WIN platform has been designed on an open source platform for the benefit of all friendly countries around the world. I am pleased to inform that many countries around the world have expressed interest in leveraging from the global public good created by India.

India has been doing this right from the start of this fight against COVID-19. In his address to the UN General Assembly in September last year Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi had assured the global community that India will use its production and delivery capacity to help all humanity in fighting the virus. This is exactly what we have done. India extended medical and other assistance to more than 150 countries India has sent essential drugs, testing kits and other medical assistance. Medications made in India were shipped to destinations across the world in daunting logistical circumstances imposed by lockdowns. Indian rapid response teams were deployed in 8 countries, including to the friendly State of Kuwait. A 15 member rapid response team from India had visited Kuwait in April 2020 to augment the medical infrastructure of Kuwait in its bid to combat COVID-19. Indian naval vessels and air force airplanes delivered supplies along a wide arc to friends and partners. Through Vaccine Maitri, the global health diplomacy operation, we have supplied vaccines - made in India – to more than 90 nations across the world, including to the friendly State of Kuwait.

India's actions of contributing to global good in turn paid rich dividends when India faced a severe challenge with an acute shortage of medical oxygen during the second wave of infections. Countries around the world stepped up to assist India. Our friendly State of Kuwait was one of the major suppliers of medical oxygen assistance to India. Kuwait was in fact one of the first countries to come forward and offer support to India. The Council of Ministers of the Government of State of Kuwait, in a statement on 26 April, expressed solidarity and extended support to India. The official statement read: "Based on the distinguished friendship between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of India and the keenness of the State of Kuwait to alleviate the suffering of the friendly Indian people in the face of this health disaster, the Council of Ministers has decided to send oxygen and other relief components to the Republic of India urgently in solidarity with the friendly Indian people and in recognition of the exceptional circumstances experienced by friends in India." Foreign Minister His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, in a phone

call with External Affairs Minister Shri S. Jaishankar reiterated the decision of the Government of Kuwait to provide emergency relief and support to India.

On behalf of the Government and the 1.3 billion people of Republic of India, I extend my sincere gratitude to the leadership, Government and people of the friendly State of Kuwait for all the kind assistance. The Embassy received full cooperation and support from the leadership and officials of various Ministries and public authorities such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Public Authority of Industry, Kuwait Port Authority, Kuwait Red Crescent, Civil Aviation, Ministry of Defence, Customs authorities. Officers of each one of these organisations worked hard, even during the holy month of Ramadan and the very day of Eid-ul-Fitr, to ensure continuous flow of the much needed medical oxygen from Kuwait to India through successful air-sea bridge operations.

During the course of these operations, we had 6 naval ships and 4 military aircraft from India ferrying the much needed medical oxygen supplies and equipment from Kuwait to India; in addition, we had a Kuwaiti military aircraft and a commercial vessel arranged by the Government of State of Kuwait carrying medical supplies to India. The over a month and half long operation saw supply of 425 metric tonnes of liquid medical oxygen, over 12,500 oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators, ventilators and other medical equipment from Kuwait to India. To quote one of the senior officials, "this operation has set a new benchmark for Kuwait's humanitarian efforts". I am so happy that the leadership from each of these high offices are present here today with us, despite it being a Thursday afternoon.

On behalf of the Government and the people of India, I thank His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait and His Highness Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait, His Excellency Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Issa Al-Salman, Minister of Commerce and Industry and each one of the Ministers, dignitaries and senior officers in the Government of Kuwait who guided and supported us in this hour of need for India.

I also thank the various oxygen producing companies in Kuwait which we partnered with (Airtec, Gulf Cryo, Technogas and so on) who opened up their reservoirs for us during this crucial hours. They even managed to arrange tankers and cylinders in short notice not only from Kuwait but other GCC countries as well. I need to also thank and acknowledge Ground Handling Agent (Al-Rashed and NAS) and Airlines (Kuwait Airways, Jazeera, Air India) and many many other partners. In short let me say this: Thank You Kuwait.

I would also like to specifically highlight the immense contributions made by the vibrant Indian Community in Kuwait during this crisis period to support their fellow brothers and sisters back home. I am proud of all the members of the Indian diaspora who rose to the occasion and spearheaded a spirited campaign to mobilise oxygen cylinders and other priority medical equipment. Hats off to all the members of the Indian Community Support Group (ICSG), members of other associations/entities like COVID Relief Fund, IBPC, IDF, IITIIM, ICAI Kuwait Chapter and many associations and individuals for their tireless efforts and generous contributions to ensure continued supply of medical oxygen to India.

Let me conclude by saying this. India and Kuwait have always stood with each other in times of difficulties. Our cooperation in the fight against Covid 19 pandemic is the best example of what a traditional partnership of two friendly countries can do when faced with exceptional challenges which is to help each other unconditionally in times of need. It was a deep partnership doing wonders with Oxygen Cylinders and LMO tankers flowing to India with personal engagement of the leadership of the two countries and the support of the vibrant Indian community in Kuwait. We commit ourselves to work every day to further strengthen this long standing dynamic partnership. Long live India Kuwait friendship. Long live India Kuwait partnership.

Thank you all. Stay safe and stay blessed.