

**Remarks by Amb Sibi George at the Virtual Conference on
Pharmaceutical Sector: India & Kuwait - Aatmanirbhar Bharat
Series of events - in Kuwait, Nov 11, 2020**

Dr. Abdullah Al-Bader, Assistant Under Secretary, Ministry of Health, State of Kuwait, Dr. Amir Ahmed, President of Indian Doctor's Forum in Kuwait and other Members of IDF who are present here today, Senior Officials from Pharmexcil and Invest India, Businessmen from India and Kuwait, Distinguished Guests from the Media Community in Kuwait,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very Good Morning to all of you,

It gives me a great pleasure to address you all today and welcome you all to today's conference, which is our second event under the theme 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India)', which was a clarion call given by Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi which envisages a merger of the local with the global; an idea that ensures India's strengths act as a global force multiplier.

Today's conference focusses on a sector – Pharmaceuticals. - that arguably may be the most relevant in these challenging times when humanity as a whole is facing a public health crisis of the magnitude that has been hitherto not witnessed in almost a century. The fight against COVID-19 continues to evolve even today and the healthcare challenge remains complex. However, we can take heart from the positive trends emerging from India and some other parts of the world. Recovery rates in India continue to improve day by day, currently clocking 92.69%. Fatality rates continue to decline steadily and are now at 1.48%, which is significantly lower than the global averages. India is also making good progress on development of vaccines for COVID-19.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, by sending valuable medicines and medical supplies to many countries, India played an exemplary role, which has been recognized and appreciated widely. India's innovative pharmaceuticals industry has risen upto the occasion and has become a global supplier of need. By ramping up production, distribution and maintenance of supply lines of essential medicines, medical kits, including personal protective equipment, Indian Pharma producers and distributors

have and continue to play a crucial role in combating the challenge of COVID-19.

In this context, allow me to quote Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi who while underlining the contribution of India's pharmaceutical industry had stated Quote "The pandemic has once again shown that India's Pharma industry is an asset not just for India but for the entire world. It has played a leading role in reducing the cost of medicines especially for developing countries. Vaccines made in India are responsible for two-thirds of the vaccine needs of the world's children. Today, our companies are active in international efforts for the development and production of Covid-19 vaccine". Unquote

India is aptly dubbed as the "Pharmacy of the World"; it is the world's largest supplier of low-cost generics, vaccines and affordable medicines; it is among the largest producers of drugs both in value and volume terms, and it has the second-largest number of Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved medicine manufacturing plants in the world.

Healthcare is likely to remain at the forefront of policy focus for leaders and administrators across the world for an unforeseen amount of time, especially in the aftermath of COVID-19. Under this scenario, India continues to remain a reliable partner which will not only provide uninterrupted supplies of essential drugs but also provide requisite assistance in the form of sharing of medical expertise, treatment infrastructure and capacity building to other nations around the world.

In this context, let me recall the Ayushman Bharat flagship programme launched by the Government of India in 2018 launching a major National Health Protection Scheme. It continues to be the world's largest public health care programme aimed at providing assured holistic healthcare to millions of Indian nationals at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels on entitlement basis.

The Indian healthcare sector is growing at a brisk pace due to its strengthening coverage, services and increasing expenditure by public as well private players. The public healthcare system which in the past comprised of limited secondary and tertiary care institutions in key cities and focused on providing basic healthcare facilities in the form of primary healthcare centres in rural areas, is expanding rapidly with new institutes and world class facilities. The private sector which provides majority of

secondary, tertiary and quaternary care institutions with a major concentration in metros, tier I and tier II cities is expanding rapidly even to smaller cities.

India's competitive advantage continues to be in its large pool of well-trained medical professionals, some of whom are serving in countries like Kuwait and are present here today. India is also cost competitive compared to its peers in Asia and Western countries. The cost of surgery in India is about one-tenth of that in the US or Western Europe. India is also fast emerging as a destination of medical tourism and Ayurveda treatment, attracting a large number of visitors every year including from countries like Kuwait.

Government of India has taken several key initiatives recently to further improve business environment and augment the competitiveness of India's pharmaceuticals sector, which is poised to attain newer heights in a post-pandemic world when the world would be turning towards India for making the best medicines to be made available to the hundreds of millions at the most affordable prices.

India and Kuwait share historical, age old, close bilateral relations which are strongly anchored in civilizational linkages and nurtured by vibrant people-to-people contacts. Trade and commerce has been an important pillar of this multifaceted relationship; India has consistently been among the top trading partners of Kuwait and Kuwait has been one of the top sources of India's energy supplies. Indian brands are well known and the exceptional quality of Indian products are well acknowledged not only in the Kuwaiti market but also across the globe. However, the full potential of the extremely close bilateral relationship remains to be realized; especially in the domain of pharmaceuticals and other medical supplies.

This event is therefore an effort to strengthen the existing trade linkages, provide a platform to businesses to explore newer avenues for cooperation and to forge a special partnership in the healthcare domain, particularly in the subsectors of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies.

I look forward to work closely with all of you to make this engagement and our subsequent engagements a fruitful one and provide a mutually beneficial platform.

Thank you.