



Press Statement
Richard Boucher, Spokesman
Washington, DC
February 7, 2003

U.S.-India Global Issues Forum Joint Statement

Following is the text of a joint statement issued by the United States and India upon the conclusion of the U.S. India Global Issues Forum Meeting in Washington, DC.

Begin Text:

"Senior United States and Indian government officials participated in the second meeting of the Global Issues Forum at the Department of State in Washington, DC, February 3-4, 2003. The first meeting of the Global Issues Forum was held in New Delhi on October 30, 2002.

The U.S. delegation was led by Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, and included representatives from the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Science and Technology Adviser to the Secretary of State, and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. The Government of India delegation was led by Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal, with the participation of other senior officials from the Ministry of External Affairs.

The objective of the Global Issues Forum is to strengthen current areas of cooperation between the U.S. and India on issues of global interest and explore new avenues of cooperative endeavor. This session focused on a range of issues including environment; health and infectious diseases, with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS; and human rights and democracy-related issues. In addition, there was discussion of the Indo-U.S. Science and Technology Forum, with both sides expressing strong interest in substantially expanding science and technology cooperation.

In the area of environment, the two sides discussed a range of global issues such as the forthcoming session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the United Nations Environment Governing Council/GMEF, international agreements on Persistent Organic Pollution (POPS), sea turtles, and fisheries issues. The health segment concentrated on action taken for the prevention, treatment and care for HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. These discussions were a prelude to full interagency discussions expected later this year in New Delhi on those issues.

The segment on multilateral issues was led by Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Lorne Craner and explored ways to advance human rights and democracy in multilateral fora. In addition, the two sides discussed the issue of trafficking in persons (TIP) and policies on population.

The two governments agreed to continue their dialogue on all three sets of issues more extensively in New Delhi later in 2003. These discussions all fall under the umbrella of the Global Issues Forum, adding a new dimension to the steadily broadening and deepening U.S.- India partnership. Cooperation in the Global Issues Forum is another important step toward completing the process of transforming U.S.-India relations to which President Bush and Prime Minister Vajpayee pledged the commitment of both governments in their November 2001 Joint Statement.

Both delegations expressed their deep regret on the deaths of Dr. Kalpana Chawla and her fellow crew members in the Columbia space shuttle tragedy this weekend."

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