

Italy backs India's Focus on Global South



VINCENZO DE LUCA
Italian Ambassador to India

Italy's Ambassador of to India, H.E. Vincenzo de Luca, is upbeat about the success of India's G20 presidency. In this interview with Manish Chand, CEO & Editor-in-Chief, India Writes Network and Centre for Global India Insights, the Italian envoy underlines the need for bolstering multilateralism and cooperation between Italy and India to promote interests of the Global South.

Q) Italy hosted a very successful G20 summit in Rome in 2021. What are Italy's expectations from the G20 summit India will host in September 2023?

Italy wishes India a very successful G20 Summit in Delhi in September. In times of great distress, the temptation is huge to sort problems on one's own or at least giving priority to one's own immediate interest. However, we believe it is high time to make a case for a multilateralism and to address global challenges with global governance. The G20 is the ideal format to carry forward such discussions, as it was set up to face an international economic crisis. And it is a truly global forum, encompassing all continents, with more than 20 countries (including the guests) with different levels of economic development and cultural backgrounds.

Q) What are specific areas in which Italy can partner with India to help actualise the priorities of New Delhi's G20 presidency? On which issues are India and Italy aligned in G20?

A) There are many links between our 2021 Presidency's vision "People, planet, prosperity" and the Indian idea of Vaisudhaiva Kutumbakam. We are glad to see that some work which was launched

under our Presidency is carried forward by the Indian Chairmanship, as the Finance- and Health Task Force, and the ambition to reform international financial institutions. Moreover, as India, Italy sees herself as a bridge towards the Global South and is close towards their demands, especially of African countries. This is why we see a remarkable potential for our bilateral collaboration in the multilateral framework.

Q) Accelerating green energy transition is a major priority of India's G20 presidency. How can Italy advance its partnership with India in green/renewable energy, both bilaterally as well as in multilateral groupings such as G20?

A) Energy transition is one of the pillars of the Plan of Action between Italy and India, which was adopted for the period 2020-2024 to foster bilateral collaboration. Cooperation agreements of the Italian energy infrastructure company Snam and Indian counterparts already exist, and the Energy Transition Partnership launched during PM Modi's visit to Rome in October 2021 has achieved some progress in the fields of energy transition and renewable energy, also through the meaningful involvement of the private sector.

Q) India made Global South a key focus of its G20 presidency? How can Italy work with India to promote the interests of the Global South?

A) As it was envisioned by Council President Meloni in her meeting in Delhi with Prime Minister Modi, last 2nd March, Italy and India have a strategic connection thanks to the role that the two countries intend to play with regard to the Global South. Italy and India, in two distinct but interconnected geopolitical scenarios, can play a mutually reinforcing role in stimulating and supporting a new global agenda aimed at addressing the most urgent contemporary issues that primarily affect the South, but which have a major impact on security, stability and environmental sustainability of the whole world. A number of topics on the agenda of the Indian G20 Presidency, from debt relief for developing countries, to the reform of international financial institutions,

to the tracks “health and finance” and “climate change”, are in strong continuity with the agenda of the Italian Presidency of 2021. Moreover, looking forward, as it prepares to take over the Presidency of G7, in 2024, Italy sees the worth of addressing the concerns of a large part of the world on the present political and economic global governance.

Q) “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” is the mantra of India’s G20 presidency, which emphasises the interconnectedness of the world as one family. What are your views on the importance of values in multilateral diplomacy and human-centric globalisation?

A) If we believe that we live in “one world” and “one family”, we need to bear in mind that families, also international ones, need dialogue to function. This means, a functioning international order with



“multilateralism as a mindset”, based a few principles that cannot be put in question: respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States, big and small, and peaceful approach to dispute settlement. Only against this backdrop multilateral institutions and the international family as whole can operate in harmony with the principle “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”.

Q) It's going to be three months since Italy's PM Giorgia Meloni's landmark visit to India in March this year? What's the progress in implementing key outcomes of the visit?

The elevation of our bilateral relations to a Strategic partnership has energized the collaboration in new spheres of mutual interest and given new impetus to the negotiation of a series of MoU in the fields of defence cooperation, mobility and migration, police, and exchange of classified information.

Q) Italy is a manufacturing giant in Europe. In what ways can Italy help India in moving up the manufacturing value chain?

Italy ranks second in Europe for manufacturing and it is among the leading manufacturing powers globally. In India, at least 350 Italian companies already established their production facilities, which contribute to improve the quality and value of Indian manufacture. Italian companies share technology and know how with their partners and work with them to find innovative solutions. In the near future, we hope to start new cooperation on Industry 4.0, which involves the integration of advanced technologies, such as automation, artificial intelligence, and Internet of Things, into manufacturing processes for improved efficiency and productivity.

Q) Defence is the next big frontier in the Italy-India partnership. Are the two counties exploring a defence industry framework agreement? Can we expect

greater involvement of Italian companies in defence manufacturing in India under the Make in India initiative?

A) The strategic partnership, established on the occasion of the last meeting between the Prime Ministers of our Countries, opens up opportunities for new collaborations in the defence industry. We hope that the defence industry framework agreement can be signed as soon as possible. Within this context, new industrial collaborations may be created, even if the concrete outlines are currently difficult to predict. In a broader sense, however, it is true that our defence industry is always open to work together with partners, transferring technology and developing new products.

Q) India and Italy are deepening their strategic convergence in crucial areas such as Indo-Pacific. In what areas in the Indo-Pacific can India and Italy work together?

A) There are many fields of collaboration in the Indo-Pacific for Italy and India. On the occasion of PM Meloni's state visit to India, Italy joined the Indian IPOI (Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative) under the Science, Technology and Academics cooperation pillar. We are also part of the Indian Ocean Rim Association and participate in the Information Fusion Centre of the Indian Ocean Region in Gurgaon, Haryana. At the same time, Italy is already actively present with vessels in the context of the European Maritimes Awareness mission in the Strait of Hormuz and in the EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta and we believe that the new Coordinated Maritime Presence tool of the European Union offers new opportunities of collaboration. Last but not least, Italian vessels are cruising through the Indo-Pacific and we are expecting offshore patrol vessel Francesco Morosini in August in Mumbai. On that occasion, we hope to foster ties between our two Navies and defence production systems.