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RECOMMENDATIONS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

P9_TA(2021)0163

EU-India relations

European Parliament recommendation of 29 April 2021 to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy concerning EU-India relations (2021/2023(INI))

(2021/C 506/17)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the upcoming EU-India Leaders' Meeting announced for 8 May 2021 in Porto, Portugal,

— having regard to the EU-India Strategic Partnership established in 2004,

— having regard to the 1994 EU-India Cooperation Agreement,

— having regard to the joint statement and the EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025 ([1]) adopted at the virtual EU-India summit on 15 July 2020, as well as to the other joint statements signed recently, including in the fields of counter-terrorism, climate and energy, urbanisation, migration and mobility and the water partnership,

— having regard to the Joint Communication of the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) and the Commission of 20 November 2018 entitled 'Elements for an EU strategy on India' (JOIN(2018)0028) and the related Council conclusions on the EU Strategy on India of 10 December 2018 (14634/18),

— having regard to the Joint Communication of the VP/HR and the Commission of 19 September 2018 entitled 'Connecting Europe and Asia — Building blocks for an EU Strategy' (JOIN(2018)0031) and the related Council conclusions of 15 October 2018 (13097/18),

— having regard to the Council conclusions on the Enhanced EU Security Cooperation in and with Asia of 28 May 2018 (9265/1/18 REV 1),

— having regard to the Commission communication of 4 September 2001 entitled 'Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships' (COM(2001)0469),

— having regard to the future Regulation establishing the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument 2021-2027 (2018/0243(COD)),

— having regard to its resolutions of 20 January 2021 on the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy — annual report 2020 ([2]), of 21 January 2021 on connectivity and EU-Asia relations ([3]) and of 13 September 2017 on EU political relations with India ([4]), as well as to its other previous resolutions on India, including those on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law,

([1]) https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/07/15/joint-statement-15th-eu-india-summit-15-july-2020/
([2]) Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0012.
([3]) Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0016.
([4]) OJ C 337, 20.9.2018, p. 48.

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— having regard to its recommendation of 28 October 2004 to the Council on EU-India relations ([5]),

— having regard to its resolution of 29 September 2005 on EU-India relations: A Strategic Partnership ([6]),

— having regard to its resolution of 13 April 2016 on the EU in a changing global environment — a more connected, contested and complex world ([7]),

— having regard to its resolution of 10 May 2012 on maritime piracy ([8]),

— having regard to its resolution of 27 October 2016 on nuclear security and non-proliferation ([9]),

— having regard to the 10th Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP10) held in Brussels on 27-28 September 2018, and to the respective declaration adopted, and to the 11th Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP11) held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 26-27 May 2021,

— having regard to the EU-India High-Level Dialogue on trade and investment, whose first meeting was held on 5 February 2021,

— having regard to the mission of its Committee on Foreign Affairs to India of 21-22 February 2017,

— having regard to the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024,

— having regard to the Council conclusions of 22 February 2021 on EU priorities in UN human rights fora in 2021,

— having regard to the EU thematic guidelines on human rights, including those on human rights defenders and on the protection and promotion of freedom of religion or belief,

— having regard to Rule 118 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the letter by the Committee on International Trade, and having regard to its competences pursuant to Annex VI of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0124/2021),

A. whereas the EU and India are to convene a leaders' meeting on 8 May 2021 in Porto, Portugal, following their commitment to convene regularly at the highest level and to strengthen the strategic partnership established in 2004, with a view to enhancing economic and political cooperation;

B. whereas the EU-India strategic partnership has gained momentum in recent years, reflecting renewed political will to strengthen its strategic dimension and, having evolved from an economic partnership to a relationship expanding across a number of sectors, reflecting India's rising geopolitical power and shared democratic values;

C. whereas the EU and India, as the world's two largest democracies, share strong political, economic, social and cultural ties; whereas, however, bilateral relations have not yet reached their full potential and require increased political engagement; whereas EU and Indian leaders affirmed their determination to preserve and promote effective multilateralism and a rules-based multilateral order with the UN and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) at its core;

([5]) OJ C 174 E, 14.7.2005, p. 179.
([6]) OJ C 227 E, 21.9.2006, p. 589.
([7]) OJ C 58, 15.2.2018, p. 109.
([8]) OJ C 261 E, 10.9.2013, p. 34.
([9]) OJ C 215, 19.6.2018, p. 202.

D. whereas India's regional and global importance is growing, and it has increasingly strengthened its position as a donor as well as an economic and military power; whereas India's G20 Presidency in 2023 and its membership of the UN Security Council in 2021-2022 and of the UN Human Rights Council in 2019-2021 have reinvigorated the need to enhance coordination on global governance and further promote a shared vision of rules-based multilateralism;

E. whereas the EU's strategic framework vested in its Global Strategy, its Strategy on India, its Strategy for EU-Asia Connectivity and the emerging Indo-Pacific Strategy have highlighted the vital importance of cooperating with India on the EU's global agenda; whereas bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the current context of heightened global risks and increasing great power competition should encompass the reinforcement of international security, the strengthening of preparedness for and responses to global health emergencies, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, the enhancement of global economic stability and inclusive growth, and the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals;

F. whereas India enjoys a strong and growing economy; whereas the EU is India's leading trading partner, while India is the EU's 9th largest trading partner; whereas the Indian Ocean is an expanse of strategic importance for global trade and of vital economic and strategic interest for both the EU and India; whereas the EU and India have strong mutual interests in the Indo-Pacific, focusing on sustaining it as an area of fair competition, undisrupted sea lines of communication (SLOC), stability and security;

G. whereas connectivity should constitute an important element of a mutual EU-India strategic agenda in line with the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy; whereas the latest summit between the EU and India agreed on principles of sustainable connectivity, and agreed to explore ways to improve connectivity between the EU and India and consequent connectivity with third countries, including in the Indo-Pacific region; whereas the comprehensiveness of connectivity is limited not only to physical infrastructure such as roads and railways, but also to maritime routes, digital infrastructure and environmental aspects, with a particular emphasis on the EU Green Deal; whereas connectivity has a geopolitical and transformative role, as well as acting as a sustainable vehicle of growth and jobs;

H. whereas EU and Indian leadership is needed to promote effective climate diplomacy, a global commitment to the implementation of the Paris Agreement and global protection of the climate and the environment;

I. whereas local and international human rights monitors report that human rights defenders and journalists in India lack a safe working environment; whereas, in October 2020, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, appealed to the Government of India to safeguard the rights of human rights defenders and NGOs, raising concerns over shrinking space for civil society organisations, the detention of human rights defenders and charges brought against people for simply having exercised their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, as well as over the use of laws to stifle dissent, such as the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act;

J. whereas Amnesty International was compelled to close its offices in India after its bank accounts were frozen over an alleged violation of the FCRA, and three UN special rapporteurs have called for the law to be amended in line with India's rights obligations under international law;

K. whereas civil society groups report that women in India face a number of severe challenges and violations of their rights, including related to cultural, tribal and traditional practices, sexual violence and harassment, and human trafficking; whereas women from religious minority backgrounds face a double vulnerability, which is further compounded in the case of lower-caste women;

L. whereas, despite being prohibited, caste-based discrimination remains a systemic problem in India, including in the criminal justice administration system, preventing Dalits from access to employment, education, healthcare and budgetary allocations for Dalit development;

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M. whereas India is one of the countries hit hardest by the novel COVID-19 pandemic, with over 11 million confirmed cases and more than 150 000 deaths, and whereas the Indian Government has undertaken an initiative to donate millions of vaccines to countries in its immediate neighbourhood and key partner nations in the Indian Ocean;

1. Recommends that the Council, Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy:

General EU-India relations

(a) continue the improvement and deepening of EU-India relations as strategic partners, and uphold the commitment to regular multi-level dialogues, including summits;

(b) consolidate the progress in the Strategic Partnership achieved since last year's summit and make tangible advances on priority issues, notably resilient global health, climate change and green growth, digitalisation and new technologies, connectivity, trade and investment, foreign, security and defence policy, and human rights;

(c) remain committed to and implement fully the EU Strategy on India of 2018 and the EU-India Roadmap to 2025 in coordination with Member States' own engagement with India; establish clear and public criteria for measuring progress on the roadmap; ensure parliamentary oversight of the EU's India policy through regular exchanges with its Committee on Foreign Affairs;

(d) unleash the full potential of the bilateral relationship between the world's two biggest democracies; reiterate the need for a deeper partnership based on the shared values of freedom, democracy, pluralism, the rule of law, equality, respect for human rights, a commitment to promoting an inclusive, coherent and rules-based global order, effective multilateralism and sustainable development, fighting climate change, and promoting peace and stability in the world;

(e) highlight the importance of India as a partner in the global fight against climate change and biodiversity degradation and in a green transition towards renewable energy and climate neutrality; consolidate shared plans for the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and its nationally determined contributions, and for joint climate diplomacy;

(f) revive the Council's 2018 request to modernise the institutional architecture of the 1994 EU-India cooperation agreement in line with new common aspirations and global challenges; reinvigorate the idea of negotiating a Strategic Partnership Agreement with a strong parliamentary dimension that promotes contacts and cooperation at state level where appropriate;

(g) promote a structured inter-parliamentary dialogue, including by encouraging the Indian side to establish a permanent counterpart in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with the Republic of India and by promoting committee-to-committee contacts;

(h) ensure the active and regular consultation and involvement of EU and Indian civil society, including trade unions, faith-based organisations, feminist and LGBTQI organisations, environmentalist organisations, chambers of commerce and other stakeholders in the development, implementation and monitoring of EU-India relations; seek the establishment of an EU-India Civil Society Platform for that purpose and of an EU-India Youth Summit as a side event at future EU-India summits, in order to strengthen relations between the younger generations;

(i) consolidate the EU's public diplomacy efforts to improve mutual understanding among the EU, its Member States and India and to help enhance knowledge on both sides, involving academia, think tanks and representatives from across the EU and India;

Foreign and security policy cooperation

(j) promote greater synergy in foreign and security policy through the existing relevant dialogue mechanisms and within fora set up under the EU-India Roadmap to 2025, and in light of the EU's recent strategic emphasis on enhanced security cooperation in and with Asia, where India is playing an increasingly important and strategic role;

(k) emphasise that greater engagement between the EU and India in the security and defence field should not be perceived as contributing to polarisation in the Indo-Pacific area, but rather as promoting shared security, stability and peaceful development;

(l) emphasise the need for closer thematic coordination of international security policies and for action in areas such as nuclear security and the non-proliferation and control of weapons of mass destruction, mitigation of chemical, biological and radiological weapons, the promotion of regional conflict prevention and peacebuilding, counter-piracy, maritime security, countering terrorism (including counter-radicalisation, anti-money laundering and countering terrorist financing), violent extremism, disinformation campaigns, as well as cybersecurity, hybrid threats and outer space; emphasise the importance of the EU-India Counter Terrorism Dialogue; strengthen military-to-military relations and exchanges in order to bolster the EU-India strategic partnership;

(m) point out that the EU and India are two of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping and committed advocates for sustainable peace; encourage discussion and initiatives towards widening cooperation in peacekeeping;

(n) take positive note of the six regular EU-India consultations on disarmament and non-proliferation that have taken place, and encourage India to strengthen regional cooperation and take concrete steps in this regard; acknowledge that India has joined three major proliferation-related multilateral export control regimes and encourage a closer EU-India partnership within these fora;

(o) coordinate positions and initiatives in multilateral fora, notably the UN, WTO and G20, by pushing for joint objectives in line with shared international values and standards, increasing dialogue and effectively aligning positions in defence of multilateralism and a rules-based international order; engage in discussions on a reform of the UN Security Council and working methods and support India's bid for permanent membership of a reformed UN Security Council;

(p) promote conflict prevention and economic cooperation by supporting regional integration initiatives in South Asia, including within the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC);

(q) draw on India's extensive regional experience and the EU Member States' existing approaches for the Indo-Pacific region in order to develop a proactive, comprehensive and realistic European Indo-Pacific strategy based on shared principles, values and interests, including economic, and international law; seek the coordination, where appropriate, of EU and Indian policies on the Indo-Pacific region and extend cooperation to cover all areas of common interest; take due consideration of the sovereign policy choices of other countries in the region and the EU's bilateral relations with them;

(r) promote ambitious joint action, with specific measures, in coordinating development and humanitarian aid, including in the Middle East and Africa, as well as in strengthening democratic processes and countering authoritarian trends and all kinds of extremism, including nationalist and religious;

(s) promote joint action in coordinating food security and disaster relief operations, in line with humanitarian principles as enshrined in international humanitarian law, including impartiality, neutrality and non-discrimination in aid delivery;

(t) note that the EU is closely following the situation in Kashmir; reiterate its support for stability and de-escalation between India and Pakistan, both of which are nuclear weapon states, and remain committed to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; promote the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions and UNHCR reports on Kashmir; call on India and Pakistan to consider the enormous human, economic and political benefits of resolving this conflict;

(u) renew EU efforts for rapprochement and restoration of good neighbourly relations between India and Pakistan, on the basis of principles of international law, through a comprehensive dialogue and step-by-step approach, starting with confidence-building measures; welcome, in this light, the India-Pakistan Joint Statement on Ceasefire of 25 February 2021 as an important step in the establishment of regional peace and stability; underline the importance of the bilateral dimension in working towards the establishment of lasting peace and cooperation between India and Pakistan, which would positively contribute to the security and economic development of the region; underline the responsibility for building peace incumbent on both states as nuclear powers;

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(v) recognise India's long-running support to Afghanistan and its commitment to people-centred and locally-led peacebuilding efforts; work together with India and other regional states to promote stabilisation, security, peaceful conflict resolution and democratic values, including women's rights, in the country; reiterate that a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan would benefit the wider region;

(w) underline that preserving peace, stability and the freedom of navigation in the Asia-Pacific region remains of critical importance to the interests of the EU and its Member States; increase mutual engagement to ensure that trade in the Indo-Pacific region will not be hampered; encourage further common reading of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, including with regard to the freedom of navigation, and intensify cooperation in maritime security and joint training missions in the Indo-Pacific region, in order to preserve the security and freedom of navigation along the sea lines of communication (SLOC); recall that, in particular in a context of growing regional power rivalry, cooperation with countries of the Indo-Pacific region should follow principles of openness, prosperity, inclusiveness, sustainability, transparency, reciprocity and viability; launch an EU-India high-level dialogue on maritime cooperation aimed at broadening the scope of the current consultations on anti-piracy and increasing interoperability and coordination between EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta, India's Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) and the Indian navy in the field of maritime surveillance, disaster relief and joint training and exercises;

(x) jointly encourage further dialogue with a view to the early conclusion of a code of conduct in the South China Sea that would not prejudice the legitimate rights of any nation in accordance with international law;

(y) take note with concern of the deterioration of relations between India and the People's Republic of China (PRC), including due to the PRC's expansive policy and substantial military build-up; support a peaceful resolution of disputes, a constructive and comprehensive dialogue and the upholding of international law on the India-PRC border;

(z) recognise India's commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda through its contribution to peacekeeping missions; strengthen their mutual commitment to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, including the development of National Action Plans with appropriate budgetary allocations for effective implementation;

(aa) encourage a shared commitment to implementing UN Security Council Resolutions 2250, 2419 and 2535 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), including through the development of national YPS strategies and action plans with appropriate budgetary allocations and an emphasis on conflict prevention; encourage India, together with EU Member States, to invest in young peoples' capacities and to partner with youth organisations in promoting dialogue and accountability; explore new ways to include young people in building positive peace and security;

Promotion of the rule of law, human rights and good governance

(ab) place human rights and democratic values at the heart of the EU's engagement with India, thereby enabling a results-oriented and constructive dialogue and deeper mutual understanding; develop, in collaboration with India, a strategy to address human rights issues, particularly those concerning women, children, ethnic and religious minorities and freedom of religion and belief, and to address rule of law issues such as the fight against corruption, as well as a free and safe environment for independent journalists and civil society, including human rights defenders, and to integrate human rights considerations across the wider EU-India partnership;

(ac) express deep concern regarding India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, is fundamentally discriminatory in nature against Muslims and dangerously divisive; encourage India to guarantee the right to freely practice and propagate the religion of one's choice, as enshrined in Article 25 of its Constitution; work to eliminate and deter hate speech that incites discrimination or violence, which leads to a toxic environment where intolerance and violence against religious minorities can occur with impunity; share best practices on training police forces in tolerance and international human rights standards; recognise the link between anti-conversion laws and violence against religious minorities, particularly the Christian and Muslim communities;

(ad) encourage India, as a member of the UN Human Rights Council, to act upon all recommendations of its Universal Periodic Review process, to accept and facilitate the visits of and cooperate closely with UN special rapporteurs, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and

expression, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, in monitoring developments in civic space and fundamental rights and freedoms, as part of its pledge to foster the genuine participation and effective involvement of civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights;

(ae) address the human rights situation and challenges faced by civil society, in particular concerns raised by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN special rapporteurs, in its dialogue with the Indian authorities, including at summit level; encourage India, as the world's largest democracy, to demonstrate its commitment to respect, protect and fully enforce the constitutionally guaranteed rights to freedom of expression for all, including online, the right to peaceful assembly and association, including in relation to the latest large-scale farmers' protests, and freedom of religion and belief; call on India to secure a safe environment for the work of and protect and guarantee the fundamental rights and freedoms of human rights defenders, environmentalists, journalists and other civil society actors, free from political or economic pressure, and to cease invoking laws against sedition and terrorism as a means to restrict their legitimate activities, including in Jammu and Kashmir, stop blanket restrictions of internet access, review laws in order to avoid their possible misuse to silence dissent and amend laws that foster discrimination, and facilitate access to justice and ensure accountability for human rights violations; address the harmful effects of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) on civil society organisations;

(af) encourage India to take further steps to investigate and prevent gender-based violence and discrimination, and promote gender equality and women's empowerment; address the issue of increasing violence against women and girls in India by encouraging thorough investigations of violent crimes against women and girls, as well as training officers in trauma-informed policing and investigation, enforcing an effective monitoring mechanism to oversee the implementation of laws dealing with sexual violence against women and girls, and speeding up legal processing and improving protection for victims;

(ag) address the issue of prevailing caste-based discrimination and the important issue of granting rights under the Forest Rights Act to Adivasi communities;

(ah) recall the EU's principled and long-standing rejection of the death penalty and reiterate its plea to India for a death penalty moratorium with a view to the permanent abolition of capital punishment;

(ai) recognise the process in India of developing a national action plan on business and human rights in order to fully implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, recalling the responsibilities of all companies to respect human rights in their value chains, and encourage both the EU and India to participate actively in the ongoing negotiations on a UN binding treaty for corporate responsibility on human rights;

(aj) urge India to ratify the UN Convention against Torture and the Optional Protocol thereto, and the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;

(ak) encourage India to further support international justice efforts by signing the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC);

(al) encourage India to continue its tradition of granting protection to persons fleeing violence and persecution until conditions for safe, dignified and voluntary return are possible, and to take all measures needed to eliminate risks of statelessness for communities in India;

(am) restate the importance of engaging as soon as possible in a regular EU-India Human Rights Dialogue, in line with the commitment under the EU-India Roadmap, and in line with the shared intention to resume meetings after eight years without such meetings having taken place, as an important opportunity for both parties to discuss and resolve remaining human rights issues; upgrade the dialogue to a headquarters level dialogue and strive to make it meaningful through high-level participation, setting concrete commitments, criteria and benchmarks for progress, addressing individual cases and facilitating an EU-India civil society dialogue ahead of the intergovernmental dialogue; request that the EEAS regularly report to Parliament on results achieved;

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Trade for sustainability and prosperity

(an) recall that EU-India trade increased by more than 70 % between 2009 and 2019 and that it is in the common interest to foster closer economic ties; recognise that India is a solid alternative for an EU that wants to diversify its supply chains, and that the EU is India's largest trading partner in the agri-food sector;

(ao) seize the opportunity offered by the EU-India Leaders' Meeting to openly address value-based cooperation at the highest level in matters of trade and investment; reiterate the EU's readiness to consider launching negotiations on a stand-alone investment protection agreement, which would increase legal certainty for investors on both sides and further strengthen bilateral trade relations; work towards the achievement of common and mutually beneficial objectives in these areas that could contribute to economic growth and innovation and that comply with and contribute to respect for universal human rights, including labour rights, to promote the fight against climate change, and the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030;

(ap) make best use of India's commitment to multilateralism and an international rules-based trading order; promote India's decisive role in the ongoing efforts to reform the World Trade Organization;

(aq) evaluate to what extent the Commission's negotiating mandate needs to be updated if the aim is to conclude a trade and cooperation agreement that would include ambitious provisions on an enforceable Trade and Sustainable Development chapter aligned with the Paris Agreement, as well as appropriate provisions regarding investors' rights and duties and human rights; ensure constructive negotiations while remaining mindful of the different levels of ambition between the two sides; draw in this regard on the encouraging evolution of the Indian authorities' stance regarding their readiness to include provisions on trade and sustainable development in a future agreement;

Resilience through sectoral partnerships

(ar) finalise negotiations on a connectivity partnership with India; support this partnership notably through the provision of loans and guarantees for sustainable investment in bi- and multilateral digital and green infrastructure projects in India, by the EU's public and private entities such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the new external financing instrument, in line with the potential outlined in the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy; explore synergies between EU-India cooperation and that with countries of South Asia and the coordination of various connectivity strategies;

(as) ensure that connectivity initiatives are based on social, environmental and fiscal standards and the values of sustainability, transparency, inclusiveness, the rule of law, respect for human rights and reciprocity, and are fully consistent with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its legal instruments including the Paris Agreement;

(at) acknowledge India's expertise in natural disaster management; intensify cooperation with India in enhancing the region's preparedness for natural disasters, including through the partnership in the framework of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, a multilateral effort to expand research and knowledge sharing in the field of infrastructure risk management;

(au) enhance cooperation on sustainable mobility through concrete measures such as the further development of electric transport infrastructures and investment in railway projects; highlight the vital importance of railways for relieving congestion and pollution in large urban areas, reaching climate objectives and ensuring the resilience of vital supply chains including during crises;

(av) support further cooperation on challenges posed by rapid urbanisation including via exchange of knowledge and best practices through shared platforms and city-to-city cooperation, cooperation on smart city technology, and continued financial support to projects in urban transport in India via the EIB;

(aw) recall India's role as a major manufacturer of pharmaceuticals, generic drugs and vaccines, particularly in the context of the ongoing global health crisis; encourage joint undertakings to ensure universal access to COVID-19 vaccines; seek EU-India leadership in promoting health as a global public good, notably through supporting multilateral initiatives, including COVAX, and help to secure universal access to vaccines, notably among lower-income countries, in particular by working together in the relevant international forums;

(ax) raise the level of ambition of EU-India bilateral and multilateral cooperation on climate change, notably by accelerating green growth and a just and safe clean energy transition, reaching climate neutrality, and enhancing the ambition of nationally determined contributions; continue common global leadership in support of the Paris Agreement and focus on implementing the clean and renewable energy and circular economy agendas;

(ay) reaffirm a joint commitment, as two major global greenhouse gas emitters, to more coordinated efforts towards mitigating the effects of climate change; note India's leadership in renewable energy and the progress made through the EU-India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership; encourage investment in and cooperation to further advance electric mobility, sustainable cooling, next generation battery technology, distributed generation of electricity, and just transition in India; initiate a discussion on and evaluate strategic cooperation in the field of rare earths; intensify the implementation of the sustainable water management partnership;

(az) promote an ambitious common agenda and global action on biodiversity, including in the run-up to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 15) in May 2021;

(ba) strive for co-leadership in setting and advancing international standards in the digital economy grounded in sustainable and responsible digitalisation and a rule of law and human rights-based ICT environment, while addressing cybersecurity threats and protecting fundamental rights and freedoms, including the protection of personal data;

(bb) step up the EU's ambitions for digital connectivity with India in the context of the EU's digital transformation strategy; work together with India in the development and use of critical technologies, keeping in mind the great strategic and security implications that such new technologies carry; invest in a partnership in digital services and the development of responsible and human rights-based artificial intelligence; welcome India's efforts towards a GDPR-like high level of personal data protection and continue to support data protection reform in India; highlight the mutual benefits of intensified cooperation in this area; encourage further convergence between regulatory frameworks to ensure a high level of protection of personal data and privacy, including through possible data adequacy decisions, with a view to facilitating safe and secure cross-border data flows, enabling closer cooperation, especially in the ICT and digital services sector; note that the alignment of Indian and European data regulation would significantly facilitate mutual cooperation, trade and the safe transmission of information and expertise; work towards replicating the EU's international mobile roaming agreements with India;

(bc) recall that the development of the digital sector is paramount to security and must include diversification of the supply chain of equipment manufacturers, through the promotion of open and interoperable network architectures and digitalisation partnerships, with partners who share the EU's values and utilise technology in compliance with fundamental rights;

(bd) take effective steps to facilitate EU-India mobility, including for migrants, students, high-skilled workers and artists, considering the availability of skills and labour market needs in the EU and India; recognise the considerable talent pool in the fields of digitalisation and artificial intelligence in both India and the EU and the shared interest in developing high-level expertise and cooperation in this field;

(be) consider people-to-people exchanges as one of the main dimensions of the strategic partnership; call for a deeper partnership in public education, research and innovation, and cultural exchange; call on the EU Member States and India to invest especially in young people's capacities and leadership and to ensure their meaningful inclusion in political and economic life; promote Indian participation, notably that of Indian students and young practitioners, in EU programmes such as Horizon Europe, the European Research Council, the Marie Sklodowska-Curie fellowship and people-to-people exchanges in education and culture; promote, in this regard, the Erasmus+ programme and ensure equal inclusion of female students, scientists, researchers and professionals in these programmes; continue close cooperation in research and innovation, including human-centric and ethics-based digital technologies, while encouraging the strengthening of digital literacy and skills;

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(bf) further explore possibilities for comprehensive collaboration under the G20 framework on employment and social policies, such as social protection, minimum wage, female labour market participation, decent job creation, occupational safety and health; cooperate on the eradication of child labour by supporting the application and monitoring the respect of ILO Conventions 138 (Minimum Age Convention) and 182 (Worst Form of Child Labour Convention), ratified by India in June 2017;

2. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.