

Opening Remarks by Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International – DNC DAY 02

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning to all of you. It is my distinct honor and privilege to welcome you to the second and final day of the “Prime Time: Dialogues on “Deliverables to Deliveries” Conclave. I am Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General of CUTS International, and we are delighted to host you for this significant event.

Yesterday, we successfully concluded the first day of the Conclave, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the speakers, panellists, and participants who had contributed to yesterday’s insightful discussions.

Your engagement and contributions are pivotal to the success of this event. We had the privilege of listening to some great insights into the various aspects of U.S - India defense and security partnership where we discussed the historical shift and evolution of mutual strategic interest of the two countries, potential areas of growth, scope of the bilateral partnership from sea to space, ocean diplomacy with sustainable development and strategies to build a modern defense industrial ecosystem through the integration of MSMEs.

We also heard a very powerful speech by Ambassador Eric Garcetti, who believed our relationship to not be a bet, but a commitment and friendship that is true, tried and tested. He stated our partnership to not be a win or lose or a zero sum game, as it’s all about trusting each other without the hope for return.

We started off with the first session by analyzing the historical shift and evolution of mutual strategic interest between the U.S.-India, which emphasized the strategic imperatives of the U.S.-India bilateral relations across multiple domains. Lt Gen Anil K Ahuja highlighted the importance of technology as a strategic imperative for bilateral relations, moving beyond just technological advancements. Ashley Tellis, Tata Chair for strategic affairs and senior fellow at Carnegie Endowment also outlined the five areas for improvement that are -strategic consultation, military cooperation, defense trade, industrial cooperation, and combined operations. And Finally, Capt. Sarabjeet Parmar (Retd.) who emphasized the need to explore the possibility of underwater domain awareness not only in specific regions but also exporting it to other countries.

The next panel included Admiral Karambir Singh, Group Captain (Dr.) Ajey Lele (Retd.), Deputy Director General, and Maj Gen. R. S. Yadav, who echoed the need for underwater domain awareness and potential alliances while also advocating for co-production and co-development beyond transactional relationships.

The session also explored the possibility of opening space exploration to private entities in India, marking a significant step forward. The speakers shared their experiences in leading a private consulting team, underscoring the importance of timely government orders for mission launches. The session was moderated by Lt Gen. Anil Kumar Bhatt (Retd.), and it discussed the growing role of the private sector in space, emphasizing that despite advancements, India still lags behind the U.S. He highlighted that space is becoming increasingly congested and contested, with space tourism and assets becoming imminent realities.

In the discussion, Air Chief Marshal R.K.S Bhadauria called for faster progress in technology, cyber security, and space capabilities. Group Captain (Dr.) Ajey Lele advocated for global collaboration in space infrastructure and policy frameworks. The panel discussed also highlighted the strategic challenges for smaller countries and governance issues in international waters.

We finally ended our first day with a session that discussed the strategies to build a modern defense industrial ecosystem, which are the essential pillars for building a roadmap for industrial collaboration. The last session of the day concluded with emphasis on emergence and development of aero industry in India and emphasized on not just Make in India but also Make for world.

After the fruitful discussions yesterday, we now look forward to today's sessions. We will continue to delve into the critical themes that will cover the role of media and journalism, next steps within the U.S.-India defense partnership, and recommendations and policy interventions for further strengthening the U.S. - India defense and security partnership.

We are at an inflection point in our bilateral relationship, and the insights gained yesterday and today will guide our efforts towards a more robust and resilient partnership.

Let us carry forward the momentum and enthusiasm into today's sessions as well. Thank you once again for your invaluable contributions. I look forward to the

engaging discussions that will continue to shape the future of the U.S.-India partnership.

Thank you.