

'India, Africa are key stakeholders for a safe and secure Indian Ocean'

DEFENCE TIES. Rajnath Singh invites African countries to explore Indian defence equipment and technologies

Dalip Singh
Gandhinagar

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said India and the African countries are important stakeholders in ensuring a safe and secure maritime environment, especially in the Indian Ocean, and also assured to continue to intensify and deepen engagements with the continent.

Addressing the India-Africa Defence Dialogue on the sidelines of DefExpo 2022 in Gandhinagar on Tuesday, he reiterated India's support to Africa to deal with challenges of conflict, terrorism and violent extremism.

The "Gandhinagar Declaration" was also adopted at the Dialogue to enhance cooper-



PARTNERING AFRICA. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh speaking at the India-Africa Defence Dialogue, in Gandhinagar

ation in the fields of training and military exercises.

'DEEPEN ENGAGEMENT'

The Minister said, "India remains united with African countries in their quest for peace, security, stability, growth and prosperity. Our

partnership with Africa is centered on the ten guiding principles articulated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his address to Parliament of Uganda in 2018. He had clearly stated that Africa will be at the top of our priorities. We will con-

tinue to intensify and deepen our engagements with Africa. Apart from the goals of developmental, commercial and technological partnerships that India wants to forge with African nations, the statement also covered cooperation in strengthening capabilities in combating terrorism and extremism, supporting UN peacekeeping missions and work for open and free oceans."

PEACE AND SECURITY

With an eye to meet the \$5 billion export target, Singh invited African countries to explore Indian defence equipment and technologies. "Peace, security and development are inter-related. Security is essential for enabling development in the region. We have created a ro-

bust public and private defence industry. A defence manufacturing ecosystem has been created in India which has the advantage of abundant technical manpower. Our defence industry can work with you to fulfil your defence requirements," he told his African counterparts.

Fifty African countries, including 20 Defence Ministers, seven Chief of Defence Staff/Service Chiefs and eight Permanent Secretaries participated in the Dialogue, indicating the importance accorded to the engagement in defence and security. Singh and his deputy minister Ajay Bhatt met with the visiting African Ministers where issues related to defence and bilateral relations were discussed.