

India-Niger Bilateral Relations

Background

1. Niger is a land-locked country in sub-Sahara region of West Africa. Bilateral cooperation in the past was mainly limited to the multilateral fora. Bilateral relations between India and Niger are cordial. Bilateral activities gained momentum after opening of Indian resident Diplomatic Mission in Niamey in May 2009. Niger had opened its Embassy in New Delhi in November 2011.

Visits from Niger

2. There have been several visits from Niger to India. President Issoufou Mahamadou had visited India in October 2015 to participate in India-Africa Forum Summit, and in March 2018 to attend the Founding Conference of International Solar Alliance. During both the visits he had met Prime Minister Modi.

3. In addition to this, in 2005 (i) Niger Foreign Minister visited India and a high level government and commercial delegations participated in the CII-EXIM Conclave on "India-Africa Project Partnerships" in New Delhi. In 2006 (i) its Foreign Minister again visited India. In 2010 (i) its Minister of Information and Communication Technology visited Hyderabad to participate in the ITU-World Telecom Development Conference. In 2011 (i) its Foreign Minister participated in the "India-LDC Ministerial Conference" held in New Delhi; (ii) Minister of Mines and Energy visited Mumbai for discussions on civil nuclear cooperation with Department of Atomic Energy. In 2012 (i) Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, visited India to attend India-Africa Science & Technology Ministerial Conference; (ii) Minister of Energy & Petroleum visited New Delhi to participate in International Seminar on Energy Access; and (iii) a 5-member delegation comprising senior government officials and leading importers of pharmaceuticals also attended Reverse Buyer Seller Meet coinciding with 64th Indian Pharmaceutical Congress in Chennai. In 2013 (i) Niger Ministerial delegation, led by Minister of Plan, Territorial Planning and Community Development, attended the 9th CII EXIM Bank India-Africa Conclave held in New Delhi; (ii) Minister of Water Resources and Environment visited New Delhi on the invitation of WAPCOS to sign MOU for PMC for "Potable Water Project", an LOC project under consideration with GOI at that time; and (iii) Minister of Plan, Territorial Management and Community Development visited New Delhi for signing the LoC Agreement with EXIM Bank of India for Solar electrification of 30 villages (US\$ 9.84 million) and for setting up Solar Photo Voltaic System of 5 Mega Watt (US\$ 24.70 million). In 2014 (i) Minister of Commerce and Promotion of Private Sector visited New Delhi to participate in the 10th edition of CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India Africa Project Partnership; (ii) Minister of Plan, Land Management and Community Development visited India for signing the EXIM Bank's LoC Agreement of US\$ 25 million for potable water for semi-urban and rural communities in Niger. In 2015 (i) its Minister of Commerce and Promotion of Private Sector participated in the 4th African Trade Ministers Meeting held in New Delhi under the auspices of IAFS-III. In 2016 (i) Minister and Special Advisor to the President of Niger visited India and had met with MoS (VKS), MoS (MJA) and MoS in Ministry of Finance. In 2017 (i) Minister of Trade & Private Sector Promotion, and Minister and Special Advisor to the President of Niger, visited India in for attending the 12th CII EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership; and

(ii) Minister for Planning, Deputy Minister for Budget participated in the 52nd Annual meeting of the African Development Bank (AfDB) in Gandhinagar. In 2018 (i) Secretary General of Ministry of Commerce and Promotion of Private Sector, visited New Delhi to take part in the 13th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership; (ii) the Permanent Secretary, Niger Investment Board, visited India to participate in 10th CII Industrial Services Training Program along with Representatives from African Chamber of Commerce and Investment Promotion Agencies; (iii) Minister and Special Advisor to the President of Niger (In-charge for the AU Summit) visited India from 17-19 September to sign the MoU (signed on 19 September) for establishment of Mahatma Gandhi International Convention Centre in Niamey; (iv) Minister of Hydraulics and Sanitation, accompanied by Secretary General (Sanitation) visited India from 29 September – 2 October to participate in the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention; (v) Minister of Energy, accompanied by Technical Advisor to the Minister for ISA, visited India from 2-5 October to participate in the First Assembly of the International Solar Alliance which is being held in conjunction with the second Renewable Energy Global Investors Meet and Expo (2nd RE-INVEST); (vi) The Minister of Commerce and Private Sector Promotion, accompanied by Secretary General, Ministry of Commerce, participated in the CII-EXIM Bank Regional Conclave on India and West Africa which took place in Abuja (Nigeria) from 8-9 October. A delegation from the Niger Chamber of Commerce and Industry also participated in the Conclave. In 2019 (i) Two top CEOs from Niger have visited India to participate in the Africa Day which was part of the 9th Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2019 held in Gandhinagar from 18-20 January; (ii) A delegation led by Mrs. Zada Mariama, Secretary General of Ministry of Trade visited India to attend the Raw Material Sourcing Meet which was held at Chennai on 1 February and India International Leather Fair also held at Chennai from 1-3 February; (iii) A 14-member Group consisting of cultural troupe and artisans from Niger visited India from 31 January-18 February to participate in the Surajkund International Craft Mela 2019 held at Haryana; (iv) A two member delegation from Ministry of Petroleum visited India from 9-12 February to participate in the PETROTECH 2019 in Delhi; (v) A 4-member delegation from Niger Ministry of Commerce and Private Sector Promotion visited India to participate in the 14th Edition of CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership which was held in New Delhi from 17-19 March; (vi) A Familiarization Program for a group of 25-30 African Journalists from good mix of print and electronic media was also organized from 17-24 in the margins of CII-EXIM Bank Conclave in which Mr. Zakari Alzouma Coulibaly, Director of National Office for Edition and Press, participated from Niger; (vii) A 12-Member Nigerien defence delegation (including Nigerien Defence Attache based in New Delhi) visited Pune to participate in the India-Africa Field Training Exercise (IAFTX) organized by the Indian Army from 18-27 March.

4. Under the Ministry's Familiarization Visit-cum-Training Program of African Journalists, one Journalist from La Sahel had visited India in March 2017 to attend Workshop on 'Writing and Reporting for Print and Electronic Media'. Under another Familiarization Program to enhance young Parliamentarians from Africa to create awareness regarding various aspects of India's development, 2 Nigerien Parliamentarians from Niger National Assembly had visited India in August 2017. In August 2018 two more Nigerien Journalists have visited India under the 'Familiarization Visit of Journalists from Francophone Countries in Africa'.

Visits from India

5. The high level visit from India to Niger so far has happened in the context of India-Africa Forum Summit-III held in October 2015; signing of LoCs with Exim Bank, etc. Bilateral visits at the level of HOS/HOG, Foreign Minister and other senior Cabinet Ministers are yet to take place. However, the following important visits have taken place from India to Niger in the past few years: In 2007 (i) Shri Anand Sharma, MoS for External Affairs, met the then Prime Minister of Niger in Accra during his visit to Ghana to participate in the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Ghana's Independence. In 2012 (i) an 11-member CII trade delegation, led by Joint Secretary (West Africa), visited Niamey and had meetings with Nigerien Prime Minister and several other Ministers. A MoU for Cooperation between CII and Nigerien Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Handicrafts, was also signed. In 2015 (i) Shri GM Siddeshwara, MoS for Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises, visited Niger as the Special Envoy of Prime Minister of India, to deliver the letters of invitations for the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit and called on the President Issoufou Mahamadou and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs. In 2016 (i) Shri Amarendra Khatua, Dean (FSI) & Special Envoy of Government of India, visited Niamey and interacted with Nigerien leadership, including President Issoufou Mahamadou, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as Minister of Planning. In 2017 (i) an MEA-EXIM Bank delegation visited Niamey for monitoring the ongoing drinking water project under GoI LoC in Niger; and (ii) a two-member team visited Niamey in connection with a feasibility study for setting up of Centre for Geo-Informatics Applications in Rural Development (CGARD) in Niamey. In 2018 (i) a two Member team from the National Building Construction Company, being the Project Management Consultant for the MGICC project, visited Niamey in June 2018 and had meetings with all stakeholders. In 2019 (i) Shri Poornapradnya Mahuli, Manager (Lines of Credit Group) of EXIM Bank, visited Niger from 23-29 January to ascertain the progress of the Government of India-supported Line of Credit projects being executed in Niger. (ii) Shri Ajay Kumar, Joint Secretary (DPA-I), Ministry of External Affairs, visited Niamey from 10-12 June to make an assessment of the on-going MGICC Project.

Institutional Dialogues

6. The following MoU have been signed between India-Niger: (a) an MoU between Indian Council of World Affairs (**ICWA**), New Delhi, and the Promotion of Initiatives for Development Association (APIDB), Niamey, was signed in 2011; (b) another MoU was signed in 2012 between Confederation of Indian Industry (**CII**) and Nigerien Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Handicrafts, in Niamey. (c) Niger has signed the **Letter of Intent** in April 2017 for inclusion in India's Duty Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme and to avail of its benefits which are extended by Government of India to select LDCs. DFTP allows duty free quota free market access to India which includes 33 African countries, including Niger. In July 2017 Niger has joined the DFTP. (d) An MoU for the establishment of Mahatma Gandhi International Convention Centre was signed by the Secretary (Economic Relations), Ministry of External Affairs, and Ambassador of Niger to India, on 19 September, 2018, in New Delhi.

7. In addition, text of following two draft Agreements have been finalized and agreed upon by both sides and are ready for signatures: (i) Agreement for Protocol on Consultations; and (ii) Agreement for Establishment of Joint Commission.

8. Two more MoUs (i) for setting up a Centre for Geo Informatics Application for Rural Development (CGARD); and (ii) for cooperation in the field of agriculture and allied sector, are under consideration.

Niger's support to India in UN

9. Niger has been supporting India's candidature for various posts in the international fora. Recently, Niger has supported Indian candidatures for the (a) Post of Director, Compliance and Facilitation, World Customs Organization; and (b) Position of External Auditor of World Health Organization for the term 2020-2023. In 2016, Niger had conveyed its unilateral support to the Indian candidature for the Non-Permanent seat of the United National Security Council for the term 2021-2022. Recently, upon request from Niger, India has also committed support to Niger for their candidature to the Non-Permanent Seat of the UNSC for the 2020-21 term. Niger's position on UN reforms is that of African Union's common position.

Bilateral Trade

10. India's trade with Niger which stood in 2016-17 at US\$ 81.27 million has touched US\$ 140.45 million in 2017-18. The main items being exported from India to Niger include cereals, pharmaceutical products, cotton, sugar, miscellaneous edible preparations, electrical machinery & equipment, and man-made filaments. India imports from Niger mainly mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation, wood and articles of wood, wood charcoal, and electrical machinery and equipment. These figures still do not truly reflect the quantum of trade as a large number of Niger businessmen procure Indian goods and products from Dubai and the actual volume of export of Indian products to Niger may be significantly higher. Bilateral trade between India and Niger is expected to increase with growing awareness about Indian strengths in different sectors of the economy. With Indian companies doing LOC and other projects in Niamey, their footprint in Niger is likely to grow and may provide impetus to bilateral trade.

Investments in Niger

11. There are few Indian companies operating in Niger which have invested in Niger. M/s Airtel Cellular Services is the leading mobile service provider in Niger, having captured 64% of the local mobile market share. It has invested around US\$ 350 million in expansion and diversifying its services in Niger. M/s Euroworld International, a firm owned by Indian nationals registered in Niger, is constructing a four star hotel in Niamey with an investment of around US\$ 64 million. M/s Contec Global has made an investment of approx. US\$ 10 million to operate on BOOT (Build, Own, Operate, and Transfer) basis, a venture for issue of Passport to Niger nationals. M/s Diamond India, a cement manufacturing company which has made an investment of about US\$ 8 million for setting up a cement plant at Malbaza in Tahoua region, having production capacity of about 5,40,000 MT cement per year. M/s Satguru Travels has invested around US\$ 3 million in Niger. They are basically engaged in providing travel services. It has earned good reputation among Niger Government Ministries and is believed to be the most efficient and reliable premier travel agency in Niger. M/s Shivam General Trading Company is the sole distributors of TVS and Bajaj bikes, Mahindra Gensets and vehicles, and of Godrej Locks, in Niger, which has invested US\$ 2.6 million in Niger. They are part of M/s Satguru holding, and own electronic goods shop in Niamey. M/s Belvie Healthcare S.A. has invested US\$ 0.8 million in setting up a plant in Niger for mineral water. M/s Afriplast Niger has invested about US\$ 0.5 million in PVC products and has been manufacturing RPVC pipes for potable water, irrigation and boreholes. Details of Nigerien investments in India are not available and these may be negligible and not much.

Development Partnership Cooperation and Capacity Building

12. In order to strengthen bilateral trade and cooperation India has been extending Lines of Credit (LoC) to Niger from time to time. Following is a brief account of LoCs extended to Niger:

- A Line of Credit (LoC) of US\$ 17 million was extended 2005 for procurement of buses, trucks, tractors, flour mills, motor pumps, etc. In 2008 another LoC for US\$ 20 million was extended (a) rehabilitation of 6 power stations; (b) purchase of 3 power transformers; (c) rehabilitation as well as erection of power lines between various places in Niger. Both these LoC are completed.
- Currently projects under two LoCs are going on: (a) Solar electrification of 30 rural villages (number enhanced to 50 villages) using photovoltaic system (at an approved cost of US\$ 9.84 million). The project is nearing completion; and (b) Setting up of a Solar Photovoltaic Plant of 5 MW (enhanced to 7 MW) capacity (US\$ 24.70 million) covering 20 hectare area. This project has been completed in October 2018 and was inaugurated on 24 November by the Prime Minister of Niger. There is an unutilized amount of US \$ 7.6973 million (approximately) for which the Nigerien side has requested for additional 1 MW capacity, and solar electrification of 45 more villages. The GoI has approved the proposed utilization and the same has already been conveyed to the Niger side. One more LoC of US\$ 25 million for Potable Water for Semi-Urban and Rural Communities is going on under which 500 boreholes were to be drilled and constructed. This project is also completed.
- As per Niger's Government request for a Convention Centre, Government of India had approved an amount of US\$ 35.484 million for construction of a Mahatma Gandhi International Convention Centre in Niamey for hosting of the African Union Summit in 2019. It is a grant project. M/s Shapoorji Pallonji Private Company Limited is presently constructing the Centre and M/s National Building Construction Company (I) are the Project Management Consultants. GoI has already transferred funds of US\$ 17+ million to Government of Niger for making payments to the Contractor.
- In June 2019, GoI has extended a grant assistance of US\$ 15 million to the Government of Niger for defraying part of the expenses towards hosting the African Union Summit. A symbolic Cheque of US\$ 15 million was handed over to the Deputy Foreign Minister of Niger on 17 June in an official ceremony which was held in the presence of H.E. Mr. Saidil Moctar, Minister and Special Advisor to the President of Niger. The AU Summit was held in Niamey from 6-8 July, 2019, in which Heads of African State/Government, Vice President, Prime Minister, Foreign Ministers and Representatives, participated.

13. India has also been providing assistance to Niger to enhance its capacity building. Following are details of assistances provided to Niger:

- In 2005 India provided a relief package of basic medicines to Niger towards assistance for the humanitarian efforts for the food crisis. In 2006 Indian experts visited Niger to ascertain the requirement for computerization of

Niger's (a) Ministries of Foreign Affairs, (b) Mines & Energy; and (c) Dry-land Agricultural Research. Technical assistance was provided to Niger in ICT and agriculture sectors. In 2010 a cash grant of US\$ 1,00,000 was provided to Niger to help it tide over the on-going food crisis. In 2011 a cash grant of Euro 86,452 was also provided to help the Government of Niger towards purchase of two Television Cameras for the National Television of Niger. In 2012 GoI supplied 100 Computers and 100 Printers (worth Rs. 67 lakh) to Niger Ministry of Foreign Affairs for enhancing capacity building. In 2015 India gifted 10 Laptops (worth Rs. 12,98,120) to the Office of the Director General, Radio Broadcasting and Television of Niger (ONEP), as part of Government of India's assistance. The Pan African e-Network Project Phase-1 (PAeNP), funded by India, was successfully completed by Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL) in September 2017 in Niamey. For the execution of Phase-II, which is called e-VidyaBharthi and e-AarogyaBharthi (e-VAB), in Niamey, the Niger Government has identified 2 Universities in Niamey and Maradi, and forward concurrence to the proposed text of MoU is awaited. Niger has expressed its interest in the Digital India Programs in the context of its own Programs for Smart Villages and development of a Technology City, and possible cooperation with India.

- India also offers training to Niger in the areas of human resource development under Indian Technical Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Program and also under the decisions taken at the Indian Africa Forum Summits (IAFS). Following is a brief account of slots allocated to Niger under different Programs and utilizations thereof: In 2017-18, 154 slots were availed by Nigerien candidates under ITEC. For 2018-19 out of 160 slots 144 were utilized by Nigerien candidates. Out of 15 slots for Defence training courses, 12 were utilized by Nigerien Defence personnel. Besides, 8 ICCR Scholarships and 2 slots for CV Raman Special Agriculture Scheme were also allocated to Niger. For 2019-20, Niger has been allocated 156 slots under ITEC and 3 slots for ITEC-Defence Training courses.

14. As part of development cooperation and capacity building, the following are under consideration:

- Construction of a fully equipped Convention Centre on grant basis which Niger needs for organizing African Union Summit scheduled to be held in Niamey in July 2019. Approved cost of Project is US\$ 35.484 million. M/s Shapoorji Pallonji is presently constructing the Centre in Niamey and National Building Construction Corporation (India) Ltd. is the appointed Project Management Consultants.
- Setting up of a Centre for Geo-Informatics Applications in Rural Development (CGARD) in Niamey as grant project at an estimated cost of Rs. 17 crores.
- Establishing of a Technology Development Centre by the National Research Development Corporation (NRDC);
- Renovation of the sound and simultaneous translation system of main Conference Center of Sani Bako Auditorium located at the Nigerian Foreign Ministry Affairs' main building;

- Providing of tailor-made two week duration courses for 25 Nigerien Diplomats at Foreign Service Institute Campus at New Delhi;
- Setting up of a Vocational Training Centres by HMT (international) in Niger;

Culture

15. With a view to promote Indian Yoga, in June every year the International Day of Yoga (IDY) have been celebrated in Niamey since 2015. In the 2016 IDY, Nigerian Minister of Youth & Sports was the Chief Guest, and the Minister of Domain & Housing was the Guest of Honour. The Day of Yoga witnessed more than 100 participants, including Diplomats and members of the Indian community. The event generated considerable interest and enthusiasm and was well covered by local media. In the 2017 IDY, Minister of Secondary Education was the Chief Guest, and Minister of Culture was the Guest of Honour. Among others, there was active participation by the NRI/PIO community along with Niger's Under-17 National Football Team in the event. Apart from the National Days, Embassy celebrated the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and also commemorated Birth Anniversaries of (i) Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya; and (ii) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The ITEC Day was also celebrated in 2017 with the active participation from the Nigeriens and Indian NRI community in Niger.

16. In 2018 IDY Minister of Culture was the Chief Guest and over 80 Yoga enthusiasts participated in it. On 2 October Embassy celebrated 150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi at Chancery premises. The Nigerien Minister for the Promotion of Women and the Protection of the Child was the Chief Guest. During the Program, commemorative Stamps on Mahatma Gandhi, and Gujarati Bhajan 'Vaishnav Janto', which was recorded by the local famous 'Soga Group', were officially released by the Hon'ble Minister. The Quiz on Mahatma Gandhi was also launched. In November 2018, four India Corners (Bharat Parichay Prakoshth) have been set up at the Libraries of Oumarou Ganda Cultural Centre; in Abdou Moumouni University; in National School of Administration and Magistracy; and in Institute for Information and Communication Techniques, all in Niamey. Under this initiative selected books written by the famous Indian personalities/writers on different aspects, which showcase Indian covering topics on Indian history, Indian classics, geography, polity, economy, culture, architecture and introduction to the Indian Foreign Policy, have been gifted. Such India Corners would provide useful information on India and the text is authentic and uncontroversial, presenting the Indian perspective. Commemorative celebrations of the 143rd Birth Anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were held in which brief clipping of inauguration of the 'Statue of Unity' by Prime Minister Modi at Kevadia was screened; a Quiz on the life and works of Sardar Patel was organized; and Khadi material received from the Khadi and Village Industries Commission was also displayed. 'Bharat Ko Janiye' Quiz has been launched and few NRIs have participated in the Quiz. Organizing of Yoga Workshops in local schools/institutions is under process.

18. On 9 January, 2019, a Pravasi Bhartiya Divas was celebrated in which Mrs. Talata Rhamatou, Secretary General in the President's Secretariat of Niger, was the Chief Guest. An Appreciation Letter signed by External Affairs Minister of India was presented to Mrs. Ali Soumalia Aichatou through the Secretary General. Members of Government of Niger, Diplomatic Corps and International Organizations, as well as from Indian community were also invited. An ITEC Day 2018 was also celebrated on 12 February in which Mr. Ahmed Boto, Ministry of

Tourism and Handicrafts, was the Chief Guest. A large number of ITEC Alumni, members of Government of Niger, Diplomatic Corps and International Organizations, as well as from Indian community were also invited. On the occasion of World Environment Day, on 6 June a special plantation drive was carried out in which Neem, Mango and other saplings were sown in the Chancery premises. On 18 June, 2019, 5th International Day of Yoga was celebrated in which Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms was Chief Guest but since she was to travel abroad, she was represented by her Technical Advisor.

19. Mission had requested Niger Government for allotment of a plot for construction of Chancery, Embassy Residence and Residential units of Mission's officers and staff members. In April 2019 Niger authorities have verbally indicated their willingness to allot a piece of land in Niamey. Formal communication from them is awaited.

Indian Community

20. There are about 150 Indian nationals residing in Niger. Most of them are residing here without their families. They are largely engaged in trading and hospitality related business. There is no Person of Indian Overseas (PIO) or Indian student in Niger, registered with the Mission.

Useful Resources

21. Following are the details of Mission's website etc.:

- Mission's Website: <http://www.indembniamey.org/>
- Mission's Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiainNiger>
- Mission's Twitter Account: <https://twitter.com/indiainniger>

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