

Unclassified India-Ecuador bilateral brief

Political Relations

1. India-Ecuador established diplomatic relations in 1969. The Embassy of India in Bogota is concurrently accredited to Ecuador. Ecuador initially opened its Embassy in New Delhi in 1973, which functioned till 1977. The Ecuadorean Embassy re-opened in February 2005 and a Consulate General in Mumbai was established in 2013. India and Ecuador signed a Memorandum of Understanding for holding Foreign Office Consultations in 2000. So far, five rounds of Foreign Office Consultations have been held between the two countries in 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014 (in Delhi) and 2023 (in Quito).

2. In April 2018, then External Affairs Minister met the then Foreign Minister of Ecuador, Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa in Baku on the sidelines of the Mid-term Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). In September 2018, then External Affairs Minister met the Foreign Minister of Ecuador, Mr. Jose Samuel Valencia Amores on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. On 12 October 2020, EAM held a telephonic conversation with the then Foreign Minister of Ecuador, H.E. Mr. Luis Gallegos. Cooperation in areas of health, business, development partnership, multilateral partnership and consular issues were discussed.

Bilateral Visits

3. In August 2014, Ecuadorean Vice Foreign Minister, Mr. Leonardo Arizaga visited India for the fourth round of Foreign Office Consultations. From India, the last high-level visit to Ecuador was by former Minister of State for External Affairs, Gen. (Retd.) V.K. Singh in May 2015. During the visit, MOS (VKS) met the then Foreign Minister of Ecuador and held discussions on issues of mutual interest. In May 2017, then Commerce Secretary visited Ecuador to participate in the first Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) meeting in Guayaquil. From Ecuador, the Ecuadorean Minister of Hydrocarbons, Mr. Carlos E. Pérez attended the 16th Ministerial Meeting organized by the International Energy Forum in New Delhi in April 2018.

4. The 5th round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between India and Ecuador was held on 23 June 2023 in Quito. It was co-chaired by Shri Saurabh Kumar, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs and Ambassador Luis Vayas Valdivieso, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, Ecuador. During the consultations, both the sides undertook a comprehensive review of the entire gamut of bilateral relations. The delegations discussed enhancing cooperation in a number of areas, including deepening trade and investments, pharmaceuticals, health and traditional medicines, education, mobility and cultural exchanges.

Agreements signed

5. Several Agreements/ Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) have been signed between India and Ecuador for cooperation in the fields of defence, economic and commercial cooperation, technical co-operation and culture.

Multilateral Cooperation

6. Ecuador has been appreciative of India's role in the UN and has supported UN reforms including reforms of the UN Security Council. Ecuador has expressed support for the permanent membership of India in the UNSC.

Defence Cooperation

7. Our Defence Attaché in Embassy of India, Chile is concurrently accredited to Ecuador. In January 2018, Ecuador withdrew its Defence Attaché in its Embassy in Delhi.

8. In February 2007, the Ecuadorean Vice Chief, General Rodrigo Bohorquez, attended Aero India and Brigadier General Raúl Banderas Duenas attended the Defence Expo in February 2010. Colonel Luis Marcelo Altamirano Junqueira and Colonel Francisco Javier Narvaez attended the 53rd and 55th NDC course in India in 2013 and 2015, respectively.

9. SIDM and Defence Wing, under the direction of MoD, successfully organized a webinar between MoDs of India and Ecuador and defence industry representatives of both on 9 December 2022. Both sides held a series of presentations over products and capabilities of private and state owned defence manufacturing facilities.

10. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited entered into a contract on 5 August 2008 with Ministry of National Defence (MND) of Ecuador for supply of seven Dhruv Mk-II (ALH) Helicopters and associated equipment worth USD 45.20 Million to Ecuador Air force (FAE). Dhruv helicopters were deployed by FAE for carrying out various operations like rescue operation, cargo operation, VIP/Troop transportation and medical evacuation.

Economic and Commercial relations

11. Under the MOU on Economic Cooperation (2013), a Protocol to establish a Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) was concluded in 2015. In May 2017, at the first meeting of the JETCO, the two countries decided to conclude a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA). In July 2019, the Joint Feasibility Studies for the PTA were concluded. In October 2019, the Protocol on Joint Feasibility Study to commence formal negotiations on the PTA was signed in New Delhi. The second JETCO meeting was held on 21 September 2023, in which the two sides agreed to review and revise the Joint Feasibility Studies.

12. From 2018, bilateral trade with Ecuador has started to pick up after experiencing a slump from 2015 due to global fall in oil prices, which adversely affected Ecuador's economy. In 2019-20, India's exports to Ecuador stood at USD 253.00 million while India's imports from Ecuador stood at USD 361.6 million. The total volume of bilateral trade in 2019-20 stood at USD 614.60 million. In 2020-21, bilateral trade was USD 541.14 million and in 2021-22, bilateral trade was USD 1.31 billion. In 2022-23, bilateral trade stood at USD 1.42 billion. In the last two FYs, imports of crude oil from Ecuador has occupied more than 50% of bilateral trade by value. Other items of imports are gold and teak wood. Items of export from India include engineering goods, drugs and pharmaceuticals, chemicals, electronic goods, among others.

13. India's main export items to Ecuador include vehicles, iron and steel, plastic, pharmaceutical products, aluminum, rubber, miscellaneous chemical products, organic chemicals, cotton, etc.

14. India's main import items from Ecuador include mineral fuels, wood, cocoa, coffee, tea, spices, raw hides and skins, aluminum, zinc, miscellaneous manufactured articles, rubber, iron and steel, plastic, semiprecious stones, etc.

15. A number of impediments have restricted the growth of bilateral trade including Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures. These mainly affect Indian cotton exports. In addition to onerous documentation procedures for trade, regulatory barriers have added to the transaction cost of doing business with Ecuador.

16. Several Indian companies are operating in Ecuador. Following is the list of companies, sector wise:

- Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Palazhi Engineering Limited (IT)
- MSN Laboratories, CIPLA, SetaaPharma S.A.S (Pharmaceuticals)
- United Phosphorus Limited, Sharda Cropchem Limited (Agrochemicals)
- Hero MotoCorp, Bajaj Auto Limited, Mahindra, TVS Ecuador, Sonalika International Tractors Limited (Automobiles and tractors)

17. India's investment in Ecuador is estimated to be USD 2.3 million, mainly in the construction, agriculture and trade sectors. Ecuadorean investment in India is insignificant.

18. **Oil and Gas:** On 9 December 2013, an MoU was signed between OVL and Ministry of Strategic Sectors (MICSE) of Ecuador. The MoU envisaged participation of ONGC Videsh in the hydrocarbon sector of Ecuador based on technical data to be provided by the Ecuadorian Government (MICSE) regarding Ecuadorean blocks and basins. The MoU lapsed in 2015 and currently, OVL has no project in Ecuador.

19. In recent years, several Indian Export Promotion Councils have expressed interest in expanding business ties with Ecuador. There is growing demand for Indian pharmaceutical products and automobiles in Ecuador.

20. Under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM), in pursuance of the the national Mission of USD 440 billion export target, the Embassy, in collaboration with Pharmexcil and India-Ecuador Chamber of Commerce, organized a virtual business meet in the pharmaceutical sector on 18 January 2022. The meet saw participation from six Ecuadorean pharmaceutical companies and many Indian exhibitors. The Drug and pharma regulator of Ecuador, National Agency of Regulation, Control and Sanitary Surveillance (ARCSA) also participated in the meet and has expressed interest to conclude an MOU with Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).

Technical Cooperation

21. Ecuador values the ITEC slots allotted to them since 2002 and the utilization of these slots have been satisfactory. In 2007-08, at the request of Ecuador, a special IT course was conducted exclusively for 56 Ecuadorean nationals. In 2018-19, utilization of ITEC slots exceeded the allocation (32 out of 30 slots allocated) and two additional slots were added. In 2019-20, 106 ITEC slots were allocated to Ecuador, out of which 71 slots were utilised. In 2020-21 and in 2021-22, ITEC slots utilised were 12 and 49, respectively. In 2022-23, 38 slots were utilized. A special course on “Science Technology and Innovation Policy” for 25 Ecuadorean universities Rectors was organized at the Indian Institute of Science in February – March 2020.

22. In August 2009, a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a Center of Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT) was signed in Quito with the Institute of High National Studies (*Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales*; IAEN). The CEIT was established in the North Technical University [*Universidad de Norte* (UTN)], in the city of Ibarra. The CEIT-UTN became operational in May 2015. With the help of three C-DAC experts sent from India to train Ecuadorean nationals, the CEIT remained operational till April 2017 and trained 816 people.

23. In November 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Indian Institute of Technology Bombay and University of Cuenca of Ecuador in higher education cooperation for promotion of scientific research and academic exchanges.

24. In September-October 2020, two officials of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology of Government of Ecuador participated in the International Space Conference and Exhibition organised by Indian Space Research Organisation and Confederation of Indian Industry. The Geographical Institute of Military (IGM in Spanish) of Ecuador also expressed interest in participating in the Science Exhibition and Conference.

Humanitarian aid and assistance

25. On the request of Ecuador, India donated medicines, worth USD 1 million through two separate donations in 2008 and 2010, respectively. Government of India donated 15 tonnes of medicines/equipment worth Rs. 1.61 crore to Ecuador in the wake of 16 April 2016 earthquake.

26. India donated 1,00,000 tablets of HCQ to Ecuador on the request of the Embassy of Ecuador in New Delhi and approved export of 1.5 million HCQ tablets on commercial basis. Commercial export of paracetamol to Ecuador was also approved. A medical aid package of 12 medicines including HCQ and protective equipment was approved for donation to Ecuador. On 14 August 2020, the first tranche of medicines comprising 4,00,000 HCQ tablets, 8000 units of Metronidazole and 8,000 units of Intra venous Paracetamol (approximate cost of INR 18.5 lakhs) were donated to Ecuador. Several requirements were sought by Ecuadorian authorities for the remainder medicines of the package consisting of 7 medicines and protective equipment.

Cultural Exchanges

27. Indian culture, yoga and philosophy is very popular in Ecuador. Several Centres/schools impart training in yoga and Indian culture. India and Ecuador signed a Cultural Cooperation Agreement in 2006 and a Cultural Exchange Programme was signed

for 2009-2011 in 2008 during the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Integration of Ecuador, Mrs. Maria Isabel Salvador Crespo to India. In 2017 and 2018, three Indian cultural troupes under the sponsorship of Ministry of Culture, GOI visited Ecuador and gave performances. A group of 3 Indian artisans imparted training and exchanged handicrafts making experiences in August 2019 in Cuenca, Ecuador under the local hospitality by CIDAP (Centro Interamericano de Artesanías y Artes Populares).

28. Mission has been organising Gandhi Jayanti every year with enthusiastic participation from Ecuador. The Mission has been organizing International Day of Yoga in Ecuador in several cities (Quito, Guayaquil, Cuenca, Manta etc.). Some of these events were organized by the Mission and in association with yoga institutes and municipalities. International Day of Yoga (IDY) events have been celebrated with wide participation of local people. In 2018, 22 Yoga events and in 2019, 15 events were organized in Guayaquil, Manta, Quito and Cuenca to mark the International Day of Yoga in which over 10,000 Yoga enthusiasts participated. In 2020, two-week long celebrations of the sixth International Day of Yoga (IDY) from 8-21 June 2020 were organised over virtual platforms. A digital platform for dissemination of information about Yoga, live transmissions and recorded content of the events organised during International Yoga Day celebrations was also developed. Eleven conferences, 2 Workshops and 15 Yoga practices sessions were organised by 35 institutions to mark the International Day of Yoga celebrations. The School of Divine Values of Ecuador (EVD in Spanish), who have signed an Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of AYUSH, actively participate in the celebrations of the International Day of Yoga including in 2020 and 2021.

29. Escuela de Valor Divinos signed an MoU with Ministry of AYUSH in January 2020 to promote Ayurveda, Yoga, etc. in Ecuador. On 13 November 2020, a virtual programme comprising a conference on Ayurveda by Dr. Jeffin Kakkaserry and an Ayurvedic cooking workshop by Dr. Paula Diez was organized.

Indian community

30. Ecuador has a growing Indian community numbering around 350 (PIOs - 50; NRIs – 300) and mainly resides in Quito and Guayaquil. Most of the community members are working in the services sector. In Quito, TCS, employs a sizable number of Indians. Some Indian

nationals are engaged in the teak wood business and some Indian nationals are employed with these companies. Indian companies participate in the commercial events organized by the Embassy, local organisations and chambers of commerce. Indian restaurants have established in Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca. Mr. Xavier Ganesh, an Ecuadorean businessman in Guayaquil has opened an impressive Prabhupada meditation centre. The Indian community gets together to organize cultural festivals such as Diwali. The Embassy organizes consular camps periodically to provide consular services in Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca.

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October 2023