

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
Ministry of Culture

New Delhi dated November 4, 2014

Opening Statement of V.Srinivas, Joint Secretary to Government of India, Ministry of Culture at the 20th Meeting of the India-Russia Joint Working Group on Tourism and Culture

Excellency Elena Milovzorova,

1. On behalf of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and myself I extend a warm and hearty welcome to you and members of the Russian delegation to the 20th meeting of the Joint Working Group on Tourism and Culture.
2. On this occasion, I wish to thank the Russian authorities for hosting the visit of the Culture Minister of India to Russian Federation in November 2013 to Saint Petersburg and Moscow. The visit enabled strengthening of the warm and friendly relations between our two countries and enhanced people to people contact. During the 2013 visit, the Culture Minister of India visited the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, the restoration work done in many of the churches, the Kremlin Museum, the Bolshoy Theater in Moscow and held interactions with a number of senior Russian officials. The Culture Minister also visited the Cultural Centre in Moscow and witnessed a classical Bharatanatyam performance by several young Russian dancers. The commitment and zeal shown by Russian students in learning Indian performing arts was truly remarkable.
3. Many young Indians have grown up very closely reading Russian literature – the founders of modern Russian Literature Aleksander Pushkin, Lev Tolstoy and Foydor Dostoyevesky are household names in India. During my visit to Saint Petersburg my mind went back to Pushkin's poem "The Bronze Horseman" in which Peter the Great stands at the edge of the River Neva and conceives the idea for a city which open a "window to Europe". Tolstoy's Anna Karanina is a remarkable classic literature, and the opening sentence comes immediately to my mind – "All Happy Families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way". I cite these great Russian writers to emphasize the deep and abiding cultural relations India has had with the Russian Federation have been over the decades.
4. In the modern era, this task of strengthening cultural relations and people to people contact has been entrusted to the Governments and the Inter-Governmental Commission to which this Joint Working Group reports, has been mandated to review the progress achieved over the previous year and decide on the plan of action for the next year.

5. In our view the implementation of the Protocol of the 19th meeting of the Program of Cultural Exchange for the year 2014-15, signed on September 29, 2013 has been largely successful.
6. As I have mentioned, the Culture Minister of India accompanied by a High Level Delegation visited Moscow and Saint Petersburg in 2013 and held a series of bilateral meetings to take the collaboration forward in the areas of libraries, museums and archives.
7. There has been progress in the draft agreement on archives between the countries has been received from the Indian side by the Russian Federation. There has also been progress in the collaboration between the Kremlin Museum Moscow and National Museum Delhi in exhibition projects. We also note the successful conclusion of the Festival of India in Russian Federation for the year 2013 held by the ICCR and the Embassy of India to the Russian Federation. There has been significant progress in the Festival of Russian Culture in India in the year 2014 which will be launched tomorrow. India proposes to continue the practice of conducting the mutual festivals of culture, strengthening direct ties between leading museums, libraries and archives, mutual exchange of experts in the field of culture and art and archaeology and the preservation of cultural heritage.
8. In the year 2015, we propose that efforts be directed towards fulfilling the following points:
 - a) Sharing information on forthcoming international book fairs in both countries to the respective interested organizations;
 - b) Concluding the agreement on archives between the National Archives of India and the National Archives of the Russian Federation;
 - c) Provide mutual assistance for exchange for film related events, reciprocal participation in the International Film Festivals held in both countries in accordance with their respective regulations.
 - d) We also propose that we collaborate in the establishment of direct contacts between the State Museum of the East (Russia), the Hermitage Museum of Saint Petersburg (Russia) and the National Museum Delhi (India) and other Museums of India in implementation of Exhibition projects.
8. In addition to the above broad contours of collaboration, and given the strong relationship between the two countries, India proposes cooperation in the following specific activities:

- a) To hold a Rare Books Exhibition coordinated by the National Library Kolkata in collaboration with the other major libraries of India in the Moscow State Library in 2015;
 - b) To hold a Festival of India in Russian Federation in 201;
 - c) To assist in the preservation of the heritage of the Roerich and strengthen links with Roerich International Memorial Trust in the village of Naggar in Kullu Valley.
 - d) To collaborate for the widest possible usage of the potential of the Russian Centre on Scientific and Cultural Centres in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and the Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre in Moscow.
9. Excellency, the protocol of the 20th meeting of the Joint Working Group has been exchanged between our two sides. The protocol suggests enhanced collaboration between our countries in the coming months. We welcome the proposals contained in the Protocol and if a consensus is reached today, the recommendations can be presented to the Inter-Governmental Commission being chaired by the Foreign Ministers tomorrow.
10. Excellency, let me once again welcome you and members of your delegation to New Delhi.
11. Jai Hind.

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