

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
TO THE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH MACEDONIA**

Skopje: 21 July 2026

I stand before you today to convey the profound goodwill of 1.4 billion of your brothers and sisters in India – the largest democracy in the world. I also have with me our Minister of State and two distinguished Indian Parliamentarians.

I thank my host, Her Excellency the President of North Macedonia for her generosity and hospitality. I am also grateful you, Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to address this august House.

Dear friends,

We in India regard the Republic of North Macedonia not as a distant country but as an important pillar in the architecture of a stable, multipolar, and prosperous global future.

Our relationship was set in motion more than two millennia ago. The historic expeditions of warriors and traders from this region opened vital corridors for trade, philosophy, and art, connecting our early civilisations.

Today, this historical connection thrives through cultural synthesis. Your rich traditions resonate deeply with India's pluralistic ethos. Whether through the universal language of Yoga, a shared love of cinema, or academic exchanges, our people recognise each other as keepers of ancient, living cultures. Tomorrow, I shall have the opportunity to pay tribute to Skopje's most famous daughter, Mother Teresa, who made India home. I shall be handing over to the people of North Macedonia a beautiful bust of Mahatma Gandhi, whose timeless ideals of peace and non-violence bind us all together.

As I look across this Chamber today, I am reminded that a nation's true pulse beats within its Parliament. Democracy is not merely a system of governance; it is a shared article of faith that unites India and North Macedonia. Our parliaments are the guardians of our peoples' freedoms, the architects of our laws, and the mirrors of our national conscience.

This is why parliamentary diplomacy is important. Interactions between our Members of Parliament build institutional trust that endures beyond political cycles. Let our young legislators travel between New Delhi and Skopje. Let them meet and share best practices in parliamentary practices and public policy formulation.

Dear Friends,

India's Parliament reflects the aspirations of more than 1.4 billion citizens and gives democratic voice to a nation of extraordinary diversity. Guided by our Constitution, Parliament embodies the principle that India's diversity is not an obstacle to democracy, but one of its greatest strengths.

India's democratic experience is remarkable not only for its constitutional foundations but also for its extraordinary scale. With an electorate of around one billion citizens, our general elections constitute the largest democratic exercise in human history. The successful conduct of elections across such vast geographic, linguistic and cultural diversity stands as a testament to the resilience of India's democratic institutions and the trust that our people place in the electoral process.

I am pleased to see several women Members of Parliament in this Chamber. Her Excellency The President of North Macedonia has herself been a distinguished member of this Assembly. I would like to take a moment to tell you all about the growing democratic

participation of women in India, particularly in our Panchayati Raj system, where one-third of the seats are reserved for women. As a result, millions of women have become active participants in public life. We have also recently enacted a historic law that will ensure one-third reservation for women in the lower house of Parliament and in the State Legislative Assemblies, reaffirming our commitment to more representative and inclusive democratic institutions.

We meet at a critical juncture in human history. The geopolitical and economic centres of gravity are shifting. In this new era, India views Southeast Europe not as a region on the margins but as a dynamic theatre of growth and innovation. North Macedonia sits at the crossroads of this transformation. Your nation is a vital gateway connecting the Mediterranean with Central Europe, and East with West. We are committed to scaling up our engagement bilaterally and across the wider region, including through emerging trade and investment opportunities.

No nation can prosper in isolation. India's ancient civilisational philosophy is rooted in the ancient dictum -*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* - the world is one family. When the global landscape is fractured by conflict and economic division, this philosophy calls for building bridges, not walls.

Let us look beyond the horizon of the immediate future. Let us transform our historical and cultural ties into tangible economic milestones. Together, as two democratic nations anchored in history and driven by a vision for tomorrow, let us chart a course that brings peace and prosperity to our peoples.

Thank you.