

## **9.2 WORLD TOUR INDIA PRESENTATION SCRIPT**

By TEAM 4

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### **Slides 1**

Located in South Asia, India is home to an extraordinary variety of climatic regions—with the highest mountain range in the world, the Himalayas to its North, the Thar Desert to its West, the Ganges Delta to its East, and the Deccan Plateau and Indian Ocean in the South—India is gripped by increasingly extreme weather events, making the country the fifth most vulnerable of 181 countries to climate change fallouts in the Global Climate Risk Index 2020<sup>1</sup>. Slightly more than one-third the size of the United States, India shares borders with six countries. The most recent India-China border tension in the Himalayan region led to the first shot fired at that border in decades, shaking up the geopolitical status quo.

India's unique geographic features lend itself to a multitude of natural resources on land and at sea, rich cultures, and ethnicity throughout its 75,000-year history. With roughly one-sixth of the world's total population (1.3 billion in 2019), India is the second most populous country and is set to overtake China's population by 2022<sup>2</sup>. Established as a sovereign, secular, democratic republic with a parliamentary government since independence in 1947, India has 28 states and 8 union territories, most of which have their own unique demography, history, and languages. There are 22 major languages and 415 dialects spoken in this land. Bollywood—the Hindi-language cinema—has all the traits to emerge as India's soft power of the future. As the great Mark Twain once quipped: "In religion all other countries are paupers; India is the only millionaire." About 80 percent of Indian population is Hindu. Other religions include Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Due to overexploitation of natural resources by British colonists for two centuries and by Indian nationals for livelihoods, India is grappling with environmental degradation at a fast rate.

### **Slide 2**

India's sustainability is a mixed bag of experimentation and expectation. Its coal reserves are the fourth largest in the world, generating more than three-quarters of the country's electricity<sup>3</sup>. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has set a target of producing 175 gigawatts of renewable energy from a current capacity of 86 gigawatts by 2022<sup>4</sup>. From maritime trade and security to fishery and minerals, India is heavily dependent on the resources of the Indian Ocean. As the world's fifth largest economy in 2019, India is expected to spend highly on infrastructure projects that focus on water, power, sanitation, public transportation, and IT connectivity. Foreign investors vie for deals in India's infrastructure sector but hurdles persist.

India's performance in diverse human capital is similarly expectant. India lifted 271 million people out of poverty between 2006 and 2016, recording the fastest reductions in the

Multidimensional Poverty Index values set by the United Nations<sup>5</sup>. However, the country still has a long way to go—the more-than-3,000-year-old caste system is weakened but still has a strong impact on society. The World Economic Forum's Social Mobility Index lists India 76<sup>th</sup> out of 82 economies<sup>6</sup>. India's economic reforms in 1991 and the ensuing IT boom and growing pharmaceutical industry make the country an outsourcing magnet for world trade, but new technologies like automation and digital financial services pose challenges and opportunities to India's informal economy and cash conundrum. Cash is used for 98 percent by volume of all consumer transactions in India. Low-income Indians in particular have not recovered from Modi's painful currency reform in 2016.

As of mid-September, India's confirmed covid cases passed 5 million, ranking as the world's second-most infections. It is expected to surpass the United States within a few weeks. This August, the Indian government announced its economy shrank by 24 percent while the country is battling coronavirus, economic meltdown as well as the worst locust invasion in decades.

### Slide 3

When it comes to environmental sustainability issues, India is a global laggard compared to other countries. According to the SDG overall score rankings<sup>7</sup>, India ranks 117th out of 193 UN Member States in total progress toward achieving all 17 SDGs with a 61.9% achievement rate. With the highest spillover score<sup>8</sup> of 98.76 compared to other six countries that XMNR is analyzing, India stands out as a crucial influencer on the other countries' abilities to achieve the SDGs. However, major trends of regression are being seen for SDG 15—life on land (Figure 1). India is one of the world's 17 mega-diverse countries but IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species shows numbers of Indian species in endangered list are going up<sup>9</sup>. India's biodiversity loss poses a significant threat to global biodiversity. Some progress is being made specifically for SDG 1, 6, 8, and 13, but only SDG 13 is currently on track to be achieved<sup>10</sup> (Figure 2).

Taking a closer look at Yale's Environmental Performance Index 2020<sup>11</sup>, with a score of 27.6 out of 100, India ranks 168th out of 180 countries. India is a global laggard in almost every environmental category, except for fisheries, where it performs better than average globally, but remains a laggard in the region. In the last ten years, India has made the most progress toward improving metrics of unsafe sanitation, grassland loss, and reducing nitrous oxide emissions, a powerful greenhouse gas 300 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Surprisingly, India ranks 64th for GHG emissions per capita and 44th for GHG intensity growth rate, despite ranking 179th out of 180 in the Air Quality category. Due to its heavy reliance on coal for energy, India experiences significant challenges for CO<sub>2</sub> and black carbon growth rate, where it ranks 128th and 141st respectively. Tree cover loss and GHG emissions per capita have seen a -9.2 and -8.6 point decline in the last decade, both of which are significant indicators for climate change.

On the Notre Dame Adaptation Matrix<sup>12</sup>, you can see that India is in the high vulnerability and low readiness quadrant (Figure 3). This shows that India is in the state of desperate urgency for adaptation action while also having an urgent need for investment and innovation to improve

readiness. Overall, India's piecemeal progress and regression in various categories shows that there is no uniform trend that would indicate India is generally moving in the right direction, environmentally.

#### **Slide 4**

Despite having the world's fifth largest economy and innovation rankings well above its counterparts and on par with several developed countries, India's economy is experiencing stagnation exacerbated by the negative impacts of the COVID pandemic. This economic downturn highlights India's lack of investment in human capital and in the social challenges the country faces. Health conditions are poor with a low healthy life expectancy of 59.4 years, one of the lowest outside of Africa<sup>14</sup>. Low-skilled base and participation of women rankings also illustrate the need for further investment in human capital. The UN Human Development Index<sup>13</sup> demonstrates that the value of human capital in India is well below other BRICS nations, placing 129th out of 189 countries in 2018. This ranking is not particularly surprising given the level of social unrest and corruption India is struggling to manage.

Other third party indexes that focus on conflicts and corruption rank India similarly. For instance, the Vision of Humanity Global Peace Index<sup>15</sup> ranks India 5th regionally and 139th out of 163 countries globally. This is in part due to the political, ethnic, and religious tensions intensified by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by Modi. According to the Fragile States Index 2020<sup>16</sup>, India has ranked as the 11th most worsened country when it comes to the Human Rights and Rule of Law Indicator. Not surprisingly, India has had the largest number of protests, riots, and strikes globally over the past decade. The BJP's efforts to embrace populist sentiments have led to recent policies such as the Citizenship Act which has effectively rendered 2 million residents stateless and institutionalized discrimination against Muslims<sup>17</sup>. Backlash against the BJP has been met with harsh suppression and contributes to India's low rankings. This tension will make COVID recovery more challenging. However, there is opportunity for improvement as more women and minorities are beginning to be politically active. 2019 marked the first time an equal number of women voted in national elections as men. Despite such gains and institutionalized quotas designed to reserve space for marginalized groups in state and national assemblies, many Indians still face practical obstacles to full political representation.

#### **Slide 5**

India holds the key to determining the global success of the Sustainable Development Goals. Whether a leader or laggard, the country is pivotal—its massive youthful population, strategic geographic location, innovation, and exports have contributed to the country's emergence as a regional and global power. However, India still faces pressing problems such as environmental degradation, extensive poverty, and corruption, and instability looms at home and at its borders. India's piecemeal progress and regression on various indicators make it difficult to use international datasets to demonstrate that the country is moving in a positive direction. The

active role of state governments in Indian businesses and individual well-being should not be ignored.

In order to support human development, India must accelerate employment opportunities—youth engagement and regional, cross-sector collaboration will be necessary to create and sustain a long-term momentum that can help the country achieve its targets and improve quality of life. In order to be a sustainability leader, India must protect the environment during that economic growth—accelerating India’s decarbonization agenda through renewable energy is critical to the world’s success in combating climate change. Without question, the country is growing and advancing, but it has a long way to go to measure up among its peers, and its progress will be further hindered by the global health and economic crisis caused by coronavirus.

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