



**STATEMENT BY DR. M.S. GILL, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 61: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AGENDA ITEM 62: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY, AGENDA ITEM 63: FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF OLDER PERSONS, SECOND WORLD ASSEMBLY ON AGEING IN THE 3<sup>RD</sup> COMMITTEE OF THE 60<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 5, 2005**

Mr. Chairman,

I have the pleasure to convey, on behalf of the delegation of India and on my own behalf, heartiest felicitations to you and other members of the Bureau on your election. I would like to assure you of my delegation's fullest cooperation in the deliberations and work of this Committee. I wish to thank the Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs for his statement made in this Committee on October 3, 2005.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished Representative of Jamaica in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of 77.

Mr. Chairman,

The "Declaration on the tenth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development" aptly reaffirmed the commitments made in the Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action. We believe that continued implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session was crucial to ensure a coherent, people-centred approach to development. This requires the integration of economic and social policies and a new approach to relations between the public and the private spheres.

We believe that social integration policies should widen public participation in decision-making by ensuring access to information to citizens and by establishing mechanisms for reviewing Government policies. In this context, I wish to draw to your

attention to the "Right to Information Act" passed by the Indian Parliament. This is a testimony of India's commitment to ensuring access to information to all our citizens to the fullest extent possible.

We are concerned about the uneven progress in achievement of the main goals of the Summit – identified as the reduction of poverty and elimination of extreme poverty, and creation of full employment and integration into stable, safe and just societies. The only means to address this problem is through capacity-building in developing countries. For this, international cooperation continues to be a key and essential element.

Mr. Chairman,

The developmental models and strategies pursued by India since independence have had a profound effect in the social sector, as measured in indicators such as alleviation of poverty, demographics, education and health. The persons Below Poverty Line in India have been reduced to 26%, as compared to 52% in 1977. The National Rural Employment Act passed by the Indian Parliament in August this year, for the first time makes right to work a fundamental right. The Rural Employment Guarantee scheme, thus created, provides 100 days assured employment every year to every rural household. The Government proposes to increase public spending on health in the next five years to 2% of GDP with emphasis on primary health care and on the national scheme for health insurance for poor families.

We have set in motion effective measures to seek improvement in the quality of life through increasing the availability of public services and developing and expanding economic and social opportunities, including, in particular, those for productive and gainful employment.

Mr. Chairman

We endorse the recommendations as contained in the Report of the Secretary-General on 'Cooperatives in Social Development' relating to role of cooperatives in poverty reduction, need for broadening the outreach of cooperatives particularly in rural areas, improving access to technology for cooperatives and in providing a political, social and economic-enabling environment for the cooperatives. India has a number of well known success stories in the cooperative movement. We pay close attention to the development of cooperatives in a number of areas including agricultural production, in view of the direct impact on the rural socio-economic fabric of the country.

Mr. Chairman,

The global level of illiterate people, which is close to a billion, is indeed alarming. The commitments made in the context of the end of the United Nations Literacy Decade in 2012 and those for the Education-For-All deadline of 2015, need to be acted upon without any further delay. India remains committed to working with other members of the international community to achieve the targets and commitments set in this very

crucial sector. Elementary education is now a Fundamental Right in India. The literacy rates in India have increased from 18 percent in 1951 to about 69 percent now. The Government proposes to raise public spending on education, collectively at the federal and state levels, to at least 6 percent of the GDP, as well as to set up a National Commission on Education to allocate resources and monitor programmes.

Mr. Chairman,

The adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing was important for stimulating action, both at the national and at the international levels, to address the situation of the older persons. The work of United Nations agencies as well as civil society in providing support to the efforts of the national Governments in caring for its ageing population, is extremely important.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would support the efforts of the United Nations for an early conclusion of the ongoing negotiations on a comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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