



STATEMENT BY MS. MABEL REBELLO, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF INDIAN DELEGATION ON AGENDA ITEM 60 [A] IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY [B] SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY [C] UNITED NATIONS LITERACY DECADE AND [D] FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF OLDER PERSONS: SECOND WORLD ASSEMBLY ON AGEING IN THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 61ST SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 03, 2006

Mr. Chairman,

I have the pleasure to convey, on behalf of the delegation of India, heartiest felicitations to you and other members of the Bureau on your election. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full 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 2, 2006.

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

Mr. Chairman,

Achievements or lack of it speak for themselves. The contrast between the commitments made in the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995 and the achievements in implementing them so far present a stark reminder that so much still remains to be done.

At Copenhagen, eradication of poverty was identified as the first core issue, which was subsequently integrated as the first Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. The report of the Secretary-General points to a setback in poverty

eradication in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. Fourteen out of 18 countries where poverty has increased in the last decade are in Africa, mainly Sub-Saharan Africa. The only silver lining is that East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia are on track to achieve the target of halving extreme poverty at the national level by 2015.

The Report of the Secretary-General stresses on the need for an enabling environment, characterised by a combination of economic growth and social equity, in order to have an impact on overall poverty levels. As high growth does not automatically eventually lead to greater equality and social justice, direct anti-poverty programmes are necessary. The first Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015 cannot be achieved on target in the absence of a significant flow of resources and increased application of science and technology in developing countries. While private investment is important to achieve higher growth rates, the physical and social infrastructure is sometimes too weak in some developing countries to attract any investment. As a result, sequencing is important. Equally important is the fulfilment of the commitment of 0.7% target of ODA and debt cancellation by the developed world. Similarly, there is an imperative to identify innovative sources of financing. In this context, the UN General Assembly has a role to play in strengthening social development and giving due consideration to a people-centred approach to achieving the MDGs.

Some of the modest initiatives taken by India to address the global challenge of eradicating extreme poverty include provision of US\$ 500 million in highly concessional credit lines to West Africa; more than US\$ 200 million to NEPAD; grants of essential medicines; debt cancellation for the HIPC countries; scheme for duty free access to the Indian market for LDC exports; substantial programmes of technical cooperation and capacity building; and a dedicated satellite and fibre optic connectivity mission encompassing all of Africa.

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 eradication of poverty, demographics, education and health. The poverty ratio has declined from 45% to 26% over the past two decades. One of the major anti-poverty programmes launched by India in 2006 is the National Rural Employment Guarantee programme, which provides 100 days assured employment annually to every rural household. Other initiatives undertaken include the *Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana* for self employment of the rural poor; numerous Food for Works programmes;

the *Indira Awaas Yojana* for the construction of houses free of cost for the poor; the Prime Minister's Urban Poverty Eradication Programme for employment generation, shelter upgradation, social development and community empowerment; the expanded "*Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*" (Universal Education); a strengthened Public Distribution System, which makes food available to every household at an affordable price; the Integrated Child Development Scheme; the Mid-day Meal Scheme for school children. Apart from rural regeneration measures, innovative rural health missions have also been undertaken to address poverty in a holistic manner. These new programmes to eradicate poverty and for income generation launched in India in recent years are expected to assist India in meeting its commitment to reduce the poverty level by a further 5 percentage points by 2007 and by an additional 15 percentage points by 2012.

Apart from implementing poverty eradication measures, India has also paid close attention to the two other core issues that emerged from Copenhagen, viz., promoting full and productive employment and fostering social integration. We believe that all such issues are complementary and mutually reinforce each other. The Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, has emphasised that 'the most effective weapon against poverty is employment' and several recent initiatives have focused on generating employment in the country. As part of the social integration measures, India has recently enacted one of the most progressive pieces of legislation in the form of the Right to Information Act, which not only empowers the ordinary citizen but also ensures greater transparency in Government.

The lessons of the Indian experience could, in general, be useful for others to take into account. Thus, liberalization of the economy may need to follow a certain level of development of economic and scientific capacity. The role of the State is as important as that of the market. At the same time, unleashing entrepreneurial energies is also crucial. Education is an absolute must and constitutes the basis for the rapid development of science and technology and its application to most socio-economic areas. In this process, democratic governance also has a crucial role to play.

Mr. Chairman,

The global level of illiterate adults, which is about 771 million, is indeed alarming. The Report of the Director-General of the UNESCO on implementation of International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade [2003-12] paints a grim picture on primary school

enrolment as well as youth and adult literacy. India remains committed to working with 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 at present. The Government intends to raise public spending on education, collectively at the federal and state levels, to at least 6 percent of the GDP in a phased manner, with half of this amount spent on primary and secondary education. A National Commission on Education would be set up to allocate resources and monitor programmes.

Mr. Chairman,

To address the situation of the older persons, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing has played an important role, both at the national and at the international levels. The work of United Nations agencies as well as civil society in providing support to the efforts of Governments in caring for ageing populations is extremely important. India has initiated a number of measures for the welfare of aged-people, including the establishment of a National Council for Older People. We are committed to work with the international community to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation looks forward to the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the UN General Assembly during 2006. We would continue to support the efforts of the Drafting Committee, which is currently finalizing the text adopted by the Ad Hoc Committee. We are convinced that the new Convention would be an important milestone in the efforts of the United Nations to address the rights of about 650 million persons with disabilities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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