



STATEMENT BY MR. PRASANNA ACHARYA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 63: [A] ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND [B] IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND OF THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 62ND SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 16, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

We thank the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) for his reports on Agenda Item 63. We have also studied with interest the UNSG's Report on 'Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women'. My delegation broadly associates itself with the statement made by the Chair of the Group of 77.

The 2005 World Summit reaffirmed that full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcome of the 23rd UNGA Special Session by all countries is essential for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The focus after the 2005 World Summit has rightly shifted to identification of sources for financing gender. While primary responsibility rests with the country concerned, the international community should match up to its commitment by provision of new and additional financial resources, transfer of technology, sharing of experiences, expertise, information and data, technical cooperation and capacity-building.

Notwithstanding the normative and legal advances over the last several decades, particularly as regards the rights of women and their social and economic advancement, the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality remains in much of the world. The need of the hour is speedy implementation of legislative and policy measures for greater empowerment of women, besides gender mainstreaming at all levels. It is also equally important to address the continued violation of the rights of the girl child and the detrimental impact it has on society as a whole. We support the Secretary-General's call that the international community while addressing the vulnerabilities of the girl child, should advocate protection measures and also welfare and development of the girl child characterized by four Es- equality, education, enabling environment and empowerment.

Mr. Chairman,

The UNSG concluded in his Report on 'Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the UN system' that much more needs to be done to overcome challenges and to bridge capacity and knowledge gaps within the UN system. Lack of knowledge among the senior managers, including the resident coordinators, on how to operationalize gender mainstreaming policies is a matter of

concern. Another area requiring immediate attention is achieving 50/50 gender distribution, especially at senior and policy-making levels in the UN. We support the UNSG's recommendation to strengthen gender mainstreaming accountability frameworks within the UN system.

Mr. Chairman,

Gender equity and equality has been a key guiding principle of the Common Minimum Programme of the Government of India. As the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, noted "We remain deeply committed to this objective because I believe no civilized society, no modern polity, no developing economy can ignore the aspirations and the rights of women." India's planning process is fully committed to enabling women to be equal partners in development. A separate Department for Women and Child Development, created in 1985, was upgraded to a Central Ministry in 2005. An essential component of the 11th National Five Year Plan (2007-12) for gender empowerment and equity includes special measures on four aspects namely violence against women, economic empowerment, political participation and women's health. The Joint Parliamentary Committee of the Indian Parliament on Empowerment of Women continues to play a crucial role in monitoring the application of gender equality principles in all legislation and also to ensure that legislation in India is gender responsive.

The reservation in India twelve years ago of one-third of urban and local self-government seats for women marked a turning point in our effort to empower women. As a result, over one million Indian women at the grassroots level have been brought into political decision-making. A similar reservation of seats for women in the Indian Parliament remains under consideration.

Mr. Chairman,

To realise the goal of reducing the female poverty ratio by 5% by 2007 and by 15% by 2012, a number of result-oriented programmes have been initiated in India. A National Rural Employment Guarantee programme was launched in 2006, which provides 100 days assured wage employment annually to every rural household with at least one-third women beneficiaries. The Government actively encourages and supports group initiatives in formation of women's self-help groups. Today there are more than 2 million women self-help groups in the country supporting more than 10 million rural families. India is implementing the Act passed by our Parliament on Social Security for Workers, including women workers, in the unorganised sector. To enhance women's employability in high-end vocations, strong emphasis is being laid on skill building through exclusive institutes of vocational training. New schemes are being implemented to widen the base of women entrepreneurs, including special schemes promoted by financial institutions/banks. As a result, the number of women entrepreneurs in India has risen very considerably.

Government initiatives for gender equality have been buttressed by the proactive role of the higher judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court of India. The right to approach the Supreme Court for enforcement of fundamental rights is itself a fundamental right and in proceedings under Article 32 viz. Right to Constitutional Remedy, the Court has addressed issues of concern to women in several innovative ways.

Another crucial step taken towards gender mainstreaming is in institutionalization of gender-sensitive budgeting. Gender budgets have now become an integral part of the budget exercise. So far 50 Central Ministries have set up gender cells in order to mainstream gender concerns in their policies and programmes. All Ministries in the Government are required to prepare outcome budgets that will ensure effective utilisation of the amount allocated for women in the budget.

Violence against women is found in all countries and must be urgently and seriously addressed. The enactment by the Indian Parliament in 2005 of 'The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act' constitutes an important milestone in tackling this scourge in India. We look forward to the UN Secretary-General's global campaign on violence against women to be launched towards the end of 2007.

Mr. Chairman,

In the UN context, India was honoured to provide the first-ever Female Formed Police Unit, which recently joined the UN Mission in Liberia (UNIMIL). This participation also reflects India's commitment to assist the UN in more effectively reaching out to vulnerable sections particularly women and children, in conflict and post-conflict societies.

India stands ready to work with the international community for early realisation of the Millennium Developmental Goals through effective implementation of gender empowerment and gender mainstreaming both within and outside the UN.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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