



STATEMENT BY MR. NIRUPAM SEN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON AGENDA ITEM 55 : SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT [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] FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF OLDER PERSONS: SECOND WORLD ASSEMBLY ON AGEING [D] UNITED NATIONS LITERACY DECADE: EDUCATION FOR ALL, AND [E] REVIEW OF APPRAISAL OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING DISABLED PERSONS AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 07, 2008

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, let me congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election and assure you of our support. I am confident that you will successfully steer the Third Committee through controversies and into consensus.

The agenda of "promotion of full and productive employment and decent work for all" has been the priority theme of 2007-08 implementation cycle of the multi-year programme of work of the World Summit for Social Development of 1995 and the 24th Special Session of the General Assembly. As the Secretary General's Report on the implementation of the outcome of the two meetings states, mainstreaming social policies into macro-economic policies is necessary. In the engulfing crisis of the financial sector today, greater and more profound than any since the Great Depression, this is a categorical imperative.

Philip Augar, himself an investment banker, in his "The Greed Merchants" has revealed that young financial operatives took out US\$180 billion from the financial system in the last few years. The financial system was brought down by greed on the one hand and deregulation on the other. On October 4, that is literally three days back, Europe's leaders criticized speculative capitalism and called for entrepreneurs, not speculators. One hundred years before that, at its Congress in Seville in 2007, the European Trade Union Confederation resolved to expose "casino capitalism" and fight

it by taxation, regulation and worker involvement. Two decades later, Keynes warned against the casino economy and looked forward to the euthanasia of the rentier. Today we are witnessing precisely this euthanasia.

The impact on employment is not a North-South issue. It cuts across both. Soon it would be an issue not of decent work but of any work. Projects in the North and South are halting because of lack of equity and debt capital; stock markets are collapsing; we are witnessing falling commodity prices and falling exports. These will reduce growth rates as well as global employment levels but specially in the developing countries.

Given the depth of the crisis, Keynesianism in one country will succeed no more than socialism in one country did at one time. The Bretton Woods Institutions, would have to recover the original Keynesian mandate of helping maintain high levels of employment, at any rate through technical assistance, surveillance and regulation. The United Nations has to play a role in stimulating the reform of Bretton Woods Institutions.

From a Keynesian perspective of strengthening world demand, the issue of cotton subsidies, of Duty Free Quota Free access for the export of LDCs, of Sensitive Products and Special Safeguards Mechanism, have to be resolved in a resumed Doha Development Round. It is about time we safeguarded the livelihood security of hundreds of millions of marginal farmers and workers rather than commercial interests. This is essential for global employment levels. If we continue with business as usual the dishonour will not be on Wall Street. As the poet T.S Eliot puts it, "After such knowledge, what forgiveness?" It has been said that "politics is the art of postponing decisions till they are no longer relevant." We cannot afford this kind of politics any more.

For achieving the Millennium Development Goals, this changed international economic governance and environment is essential. Of course, the target of 0.7% of GDP as ODA needs to be honoured. But resources will not be enough in today's world to even sustain the welfare levels of the MDGs. What is needed is an industrial policy in LDCs that would encourage them to use tariffs and domestic subsidies to develop industry and achieve economic development that would provide employment.

Chinua Achebe, the great Nigerian novelist, in his *Anthills of the Savannah*, had predicted that this "hand me down capitalism is ridiculous and doomed" and governments should "re-establish vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed, with the bruised heart that throbs so painfully at the core of the nation's being". One positive fall out of the collapse of the deregulated financial system is the re-legitimization of the role of the State. Government and civil society can promote what Chinua Achebe envisions. India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act which has become also an empowerment guarantee act, guaranteeing hundred days paid

employment to every rural household is unprecedented and makes the right to work legally enforceable. Since Panchayats or elected local councils implement this, the scheme represents the achievement of MDGs through a movement in favour of the rural poor. It is forever associated with the name of Madame Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of India's United Progressive Alliance, who called it 'a revolutionary measure' and emphasized the need for popular mobilization. In Aimee Cesaire's phrase, it would eventually and hopefully create a society rich with the productive power of modern times, warm with the fraternity of olden days.

We have in India managed to reduce the proportion of people below the poverty line to 27.5% and our target for 2015 is 18.75%. Employment growth in India accelerated to 2.6% in 1999-2005.

Member States should be encouraged to follow the guiding principles of the Programme of Action of the World Social Summit and the United Nations should use its various Funds and Programmes to develop capacity in countries when called upon to do so.

For this Committee it is important to note that the rights to health care and education become elements in the "social bases of self respect" which the great American social and political philosopher, John Rawls, defines as the most important of his "primary goods". In a landmark judgment in 1993, in the Unnikrishnan case, the Supreme Court of India made the right to education up to 14 years of age a fundamental right that is legally enforceable. As Amartya Sen puts it, "the creation of social opportunities makes a direct contribution to the expansion of human capabilities".

I thank you Mr. Chairman

- With an ever expanding private sector in manufacturing and service in India, government has made the social dimension and infrastructure development a priority. In fact, the major thrust of the 11th Five Year Plan is on access to education, which is one of the key pillars of social development. While India has made commendable progress in providing access to primary education with the completion of infrastructure for primary schools under the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, the focus has also been extended to secondary and tertiary education. We have kept a target of 21 percent enrolment in higher education by 2017. This involves upgradation of upper primary schools to secondary schools, expansion of intake capacity in existing secondary schools, and establishment of high quality model schools to serve as examples of excellence in secondary schooling. Investment will be made to massively expand the University system in India. This will also be concurrently implemented with the National Skill Development Mission to help in meeting the demands for skills in our growing economy as well as in generating high quality employment. Given the scarcity of resources, private sector initiatives in higher education, and various forms of public-private partnerships (PPPs) will also be encouraged. I would like to reiterate India's commitment to working towards achieving the targets and commitments set in this very critical sector of tackling global illiteracy.
- India has the "Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995" and last year ratified the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This has given us an opportunity to reiterate our commitment to the elimination of barriers that persons with disabilities face, especially at the work place. It is also an important step towards fulfilling the Constitutional mandate of developing an inclusive society. We have a national policy for persons with disability and have also launched an incentive programme for the private sector to encourage them to employ disabled persons. Additionally, an annual national award scheme has been institutionalised to encourage entrepreneurs. Moreover, special Employment Exchanges have been set up for disabled people in different parts of our country.
- With an estimated 76.6 million older persons, Government of India is strongly committed to implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action, which provides guidance on capacity-building on ageing at national, regional and international levels. At the domestic level, the National Council for Older People, the nodal body dealing with the issue of senior citizens, is also monitoring the implementation of recent national legislation, namely, Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007 and has also revised the existing schemes of integrated programmes for Older Persons.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)