

STATEMENT BY MRS. KRISHNA TIRATH, MINISTER FOR WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT DURING THE GENERAL DISCUSSION AT THE 57<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION OF STATUS OF WOMEN ON MARCH 05, 2013

**Madam Chair,**

At the outset, let me state that we look forward to working with you and the Bureau for a successful CSW Session. I also thank the Secretary General for his reports.



**Madam Chair,**

Violence against women and girls must be unequivocally condemned and tackled. We need to ensure that the stigmatization of victims, the trivialization of the crime and impunity of perpetrators are all stopped.

We must also resolutely combat discriminatory practices and prejudices, and firmly oppose any attempts to rationalize such practices on the basis of tradition or custom.

As recent events of horrific violence against women in India and other parts of the world indicate, it is not the lack of normative framework or basis that is impeding our efforts, but rather its effective implementation. These gaps must be identified and plugged.

**Madam Chair,**

The Government of India has taken a number of steps recently. It has set up fast track courts to try cases pertaining to violence against women. The report of the government established committee headed by the former Chief Justice of India Mr. J.S.Verma is very comprehensive and recommends a range of measures.

Based on these recommendations, the Government promulgated an ordinance in February 2013 amending the criminal law in India. It significantly broadens the definition of sexual assault and harassment, includes new types of violent behavior such as voyeurism, stalking, etc, and aims for greater accountability of public officials.

The Parliament also adopted the 'Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill, 2013 in February this year covering women employed in both public and private sectors. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act came into force in November, 2012.

The Government has recently announced budgetary allocation worth US\$ 200 million for a dedicated fund to implement measures to ensure dignity and safety of women.

**Madam Chair,**

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 addresses the issue of both marital and familial abuse. It recognises that violence can take various forms, including physical, economic, social and psychological. There is also a comprehensive legislative and policy framework to address the problem of trafficking of women and girls.

Women victims of domestic violence are supported through shelter, medical help, legal aid, compensation, maintenance orders, temporary custody of children as also vocational training as required. For better coordinated response, the government is developing protocols for police and investigating agencies, medical functionaries, lawyers, and other service providers.

The government is introducing "One Stop Crisis Centre for Women" in 100 identified critical districts during the course of this year with the aim to provide integrated services required by women subjected to violence.

**Madam Chair,**

The pervasiveness of violence against women is a reflection of unequal power structures among men and women, and how women's role is perceived by the society. It is, therefore, equally important to work towards empowerment of women, politically, economically and socially.

An empowered woman is more likely to participate in decision making in the family and beyond. Thus, both combating violence against women and ensuring gender

equality and women's empowerment, which are mutually reinforcing processes, lie at the heart of our pursuit to building inclusive societies.

We also need to debate deeply held beliefs and social attitudes, not with a view to dismiss them but to modify them as required to facilitate social advancement and economic progress.

Awareness generation and sensitization programmes are an integral part of government's efforts to combat violence against women. We see civil society as valued partners in this endeavour.

A recent initiative of Ahimsa (peace) messengers has been introduced to mobilize communities at grassroots level as change agents to combat violence against women in both public and private spaces. Another scheme Saksham is being formulated aiming at holistic development of adolescent boys to make them self-reliant, gender-sensitive and aware citizens.

**Madam Chair,**

In 1992, India provided for 33% reservation to women in rural and local government bodies launching the mass political mobilization of women unprecedented globally given its scale. Today, close to 1.5 million elected women representatives are working in these bodies contributing to tangible progress in bridging the gender-divide in decision making and at the social level.

India's five-year development plans have recognized the importance of women both as contributors and agents of change. Gender is a cross-cutting theme in all development plans, particularly in areas of education, health and skills-training.

A number of schemes are already in place for socio-economic empowerment of women. The government has proposed to set-up India's first all Women's Bank to assist women entrepreneurs and has allocated US\$ 200 million as initial capital. Another US\$ 40 million has been recently earmarked for empowerment of vulnerable women.

**Madam Chair,**

In conclusion, let me reaffirm our full commitment to advancing the goal of gender equality and empowerment of women globally and to eliminating the scourge of violence against women and girls. We firmly support the efforts of the United Nations, in particular UN Women in this regard.

**I thank you, Madam Chair.**

**BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS**