

**STATEMENT ON OUTCOME OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF  
VOLUNTEERS AND ITS FOLLOW-UP BY MR. V.K. NAMBIAR,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, AT THE 57<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE  
UNGA ON NOVEMBER 26, 2002**

Mr. President,

India is happy to participate in the deliberations on the agenda item on the "Outcome of the International Year of Volunteers and its Follow-up".

The General Assembly had decided at the 52<sup>nd</sup> session in 1997 to observe the year 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers. This was in recognition of the need to celebrate the manifold contribution made by volunteers and volunteering to society. The international community had clearly concluded that not enough had been done to highlight the achievements of volunteerism.

Volunteerism has been one of the few success stories of society globally. In this connection, the report of the Secretary General entitled "International Year of Volunteers: outcome and future perspectives" presents a gratifying and, indeed heartening picture. According to the report, 123 National Committees were formed during the Year. Having existed in many societies in different forms for generations, Volunteerism appears to have come of age. The principal aim of the International Year of Volunteers to instill lasting improvements to voluntary actions was, therefore, a key and significant objective.

The observance of the International Year of Volunteers has

succeeded in providing a welcome impetus to volunteerism. This has been done through the institution of awards and special studies programmes in schools and institutions; publications of books, manuals, surveys; undertaking of research as well as enactment and improvement of legislation relating to volunteerism. The association and patronage of a large number of dignitaries and eminent personalities with volunteerism has also provided a significant boost to the achievement of objectives and the realization of targets of the International Year of Volunteers. These have all contributed to the making of the International Year of Volunteers a remarkably memorable one.

We agree with the assertion in the Secretary General's report that a major outcome of the Year has been the collective recognition by governments of the role and contribution of voluntary action and of the need to adopt strategic approaches to enhancing the environment for such action to flourish. We consider volunteerism to be one of the important tools for addressing the problem of exclusion. Volunteerism provides a vehicle for empowering population groups under exclusion to gain access to opportunities. Professor Amartya Sen stresses the need, given the adaptability of the language of exclusion, to adjust the rhetoric of exclusion to cover "unfavourable

inclusion" as well. He speaks thus of "exclusion from equitable inclusion" As the Secretary General observes, volunteering empowers people; it contributes to building solidarity, encourages participation and ownership, creates networks of reciprocity and reinforces a sense of collective responsibility.

Mr. President,

The richness of India's culture and heritage has produced many a noble tradition - and it would not, therefore, be a surprise to this Assembly to know that 'volunteerism' has formed an integral part of the Indian ethos - known as "*shramdaan*" or "donation of labour" in Indian society. In the years after India's independence, this social wealth was sought to be harnessed towards national development through the National Service Scheme. This scheme was introduced in 1969 with the aim to involve students on a voluntary and part-time basis which, while contributing to socio-economic development, would also stimulate social consciousness among the nation's youth. The success of this project led to the launching of the National Service Volunteer Scheme in 1977-78, which envisaged participation in voluntary work on a full-time basis. A National Service Volunteer would participate actively in the development process of the nation through service to the community. This was subsequently

supplemented with another programme for Non-Student Rural Youth Volunteers.

Mr. President,

Like many other nations, India too had participated actively in the observance of the International Year of Volunteers and worked for its success, through the organization of a number of programmes including conferences, workshops and youth camps which enjoyed wide participation. India views volunteerism as a continuous and contributory process in the path of the nation's development - the country's highest developmental planning body, the Planning Commission, has been designated as the nodal agency for the voluntary sector in the country.

Mr. President,

My delegation is a co-sponsor of the resolution on "Follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers". We would like to thank the main sponsor, Brazil, for their effort in presenting this resolution. The resolution aims to ensure that the impetus provided to volunteerism during the International Year of Volunteers is sustained in the future. Our co-sponsorship of this resolution is a manifestation of our support to the noble work of the community of volunteers worldwide.

I thank you, Mr. President.