

STATEMENT BY MRS. VIJAYALAKSHMY GUPTA, ADDITIONAL SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT ON 'AGENDA ITEM 3: ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR; PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST THE MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGIC PLAN AT THE ANNUAL SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UNICEF' IN NEW YORK ON JUNE 08, 2009

Mr. President,

We would like to congratulate you and other Board members for guiding the UNICEF Executive Board. We look forward to working constructively with you and other members of the Board during the course of this meeting and for the rest of the year.

We thank the Executive Director for presenting her detailed report on progress and achievements against the medium-term strategic plan.

We fully concur with the reports emphasis that with food price stability and economic crisis, greater attention is required to monitoring vulnerabilities of women and children and supporting national response through enhanced social protection measures.

We could not agree more with Para 247 that the current economic crisis is having a rapid and major effect on children and other vulnerable groups and UNICEF, more than ever, needs predictable growth of its core resources. The continuous decline in regular resources of UNICEF as percentage of overall income remains a matter of concern. UNICEF needs a predictable, long-term and increased base of core resources to enhance its effectiveness and to provide continued leadership on child-related priorities. We hope that resources mobilization by UNICEF, in particular core resources will remain on track to confront the challenges in these exceptional times.

We welcome the initiatives undertaken by UNICEF towards improving its organizational performance including the consolidation of its accountability system, revision of programme policies and practices to make it more dynamic, strategic and responsive to the rights and priority needs of children in national development context. We also

support the need for better integration of gender and equity issues in all result areas of the MTSP.

An analysis of the report indicates that there is need to redoubling efforts in health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene education; and education sectors with even greater focus as per the need of Member states in accordance with principles of national ownership and leadership, if the Millennium Development Goals are to be attained by 2015.

Mr. President,

Despite the economic slowdown which threatens to exacerbate poverty and existing deprivations, India has been making a steady progress towards attainment of the MDGs. The Infant Mortality Rate is 55 per 1000 live births. Maternal Mortality Ratio has declined from 301 in the period 2001-03 to 254 in the period 2004-06. The incidence of HIV/AIDS remains under 1% and is showing signs of reaching a plateau. Yet India, no doubt has a long way to go before 2015.

India's Eleventh Plan recognizes that the "Development of Children is at the Centre of the Plan." This abiding policy commitment to an integrated approach to enhancing young child survival, growth, development and early learning is being translated into action through the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Universalization with Quality Initiative. ICDS is today the world's largest early child development programme reaching out to over 78 million young children and pregnant and lactating mothers. There is added emphasis on convergence of services under various schemes and programmes viz. health, early childhood education, safe drinking water so as to achieve the desired impact.

India is on track towards achieving the goal of Universal Primary Education.

GOI has redoubled its commitment and support to the health sector, particularly the in-accessed populace, through the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) launched in 2005. The Mission is an articulation of the commitment of the Government to raise public spending on Health to 2-3% of GDP by 2012. The goals of the NRHM are reduction in Infant and Maternal Mortality Rates; universal access to public health services especially women and children's health, water, sanitation and Hygiene, immunization and Nutrition; prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases including locally endemic diseases; access to integrated comprehensive primary healthcare; population stabilization, gender and demographic balance; revitalization of local health traditions; and promotion of healthy life styles.

We are at the last and final stages of Polio eradication. The problem is now confined to two States i.e. UP and Bihar.

Mr. President,

GOI appreciates UNICEF programmes in India including promoting 'Community Approaches to Total Sanitation' and facilitating an internet based tracking system for separated children in the State of West Bengal. We intend to expand this through the Integrated Child Protection Scheme so that a country wide web tracking system for missing and separated children is set up. We also appreciate UNICEF support in preparing the Country Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the same time, we would reiterate that all activities of UNICEF in the country must be carried out in accordance with the Government of India-UNICEF cooperation agreement.

Finally, we would like to express our appreciation for UNICEF's efforts in pursuit of its important mandate.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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