

STATEMENT BY MR. ANTO ANTONY, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT & MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, JOINT DEBATE ON AGENDA ITEM 9: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL; ITEM 14: INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOMES OF THE MAJOR UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS AT THE 68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 11, 2013

Mr. President,

It is my distinct honor to make a statement in this important Joint Debate.

The United Nations embodies humankind's faith in multilateralism to solve global problems. Over the decades, it has rendered great service to humanity.

India associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Fiji on behalf of G-77.



Mr. President,

India attaches great importance to the work of the Economic and Social Council.

The Council has an acknowledged role as a principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development.

Mr. President,

Global cooperation on sustainable development is today at an important cross-road. The work on accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), negotiating a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), formulating a strategy for financing sustainable development and arriving at a post-2015 development agenda will be the key priorities of the international community over the next two years.

ECOSOC has an important role to play in this endeavor.

Mr. President,

The vision for a strengthened ECOSOC has been realized through the General Assembly resolution 68/1 adopted in September this year.

We deeply appreciate the efforts of the Permanent Representatives of Guyana and Belgium for leading an inclusive process of consultations towards this resolution.

We believe that the strengthened structure of the ECOSOC will assist it in better discharging its role as a principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development.

Mr. President,

The High Level Political Forum that we have just created must be seen as a forum for action-oriented collaboration.

The Forum should address sustainable development challenges from the prism of poverty eradication as its overarching objective.

Mr. President,

The Council and the Forum together will play a key role in the articulation of global priorities for the post-2015 period.

India believes that poverty eradication must be pursued with renewed vigour and determination. Other human development imperatives enshrined in the MDGs remain equally important and must be carried forward.

Only economic growth can ensure eradication of poverty. To achieve this, we must strengthen the partnership between developed and developing countries and make it more meaningful and genuine.

The post-2015 development agenda must remain an agenda for development. Its focal point must be the distribution of resources and wealth more equitably among the nations and within them.

It must also promote an international system conducive to development.

Mr. President,

India has followed a path of inclusive growth with the aim of making all sections of the society stakeholders in the development of the country.

Robust economic growth over the past decade supported by proactive and targeted interventions by the Government have enabled us to move millions of our people out of poverty.

We have taken several path-breaking and unique initiatives.

The Food Security Law enacted recently will ensure food security for the Indian people. We have enacted a law that ensures at least a hundred days of work for the rural poor of India.

We have also enacted a law for Right to Education for ensuring universal access to quality education to our people.

The Right to Information has empowered the people by enhancing openness and transparency in governance.

Empowerment of women has been promoted through reservation of seats in local bodies. We have strengthened the law dealing with offences against women for ensuring better safety and security for women.

We have also made use of Information and Communications technology for inclusive development. The initiative of Government of India to provide Unique Identification to all Indian citizens is perhaps the world's largest ID scheme. More than 520 million Indians are already enrolled.

Sustainable development is one of the primary goals of our 12th five year plan. We have been fortunate to have leaders who have deeply recognized the need for harmony with nature. In fact, our Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi was the only head of government to attend the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment way back in 1972.

Mr. President,

India's development experience has shown that human development indicators can be improved even with low per capita incomes. Kerala, the state where I come from, has managed to reduce infant mortality rates to levels not achieved by many rich countries. We have created a program call 'Zero Landless Project' by which all families in the state are provided with land to build a house of their own. We have taken pioneering initiatives in public health, making available generic medicines and cutting-edge treatments and surgeries at affordable rates. The mass contact programme of the state government has been recognized by the United Nations.

Mr. President,

India is fully committed to playing a constructive role to fashion an ambitious, equitable and comprehensive post-2015 development agenda.

We believe that with our collaborative efforts and collective will, we can create a better world for ourselves and our future generations.

In this quest, we must take inspiration from the words of the Father of the Indian nation Mahatma Gandhi.

He said: ***“Whenever you are in doubt...recall the face of the poorest and weakest person you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to her...will she gain anything by it? Will it restore to her a control over her own life and destiny? Then you will find your doubts melt away”.***

I thank you Mr. President.

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