

Statement by Mr. Mayank Joshi, First Secretary, at the High Level Thematic Debate on
“Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a
Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda” on 6th March, 2015

Madam Chair,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

I would like to thank today’s speakers and panelists for the insightful discussion on a relevant topic.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the PGA for organizing this important debate in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

At the outset, allow me to emphasize India’s conviction that the Post-2015 Development Agenda presents a unique opportunity for the international community to re-double its commitment to women’s economic and political empowerment, and inclusive and equitable quality education as a pre-requisite to achieving sustainable development.

Madam Chair,

Economic, political and social empowerment of women is a sine qua non to achieving the agreed development goals and attaining sustainable development. A fundamental key to development process is ensuring equal partnership among all women, girls, men and boys.

Madam Chair,

The Indian constitutional provisions provide not only equality in terms of gender but also provide for affirmative action for women and the government ensures these in its legislation, policies, plans and programmes.

India has achieved considerable progress in empowering women with nearly 1.5 million elected women representatives, resulting from 50 % reservation at grass root governance in many states. Gender Budgeting has been mainstreamed in all areas and at all levels. Economic empowerment of women is given high priority by making them the central beneficiary in schemes for housing, banking & finance and employment generation.

Remuneration Act ensures equal pay for equal work for all. Criminal Law has been suitably amended to ensure safety and security of women.

As required by the MDGs, gender parity had been already achieved in primary education in 2008-09 itself, and the disparity in secondary education is set to disappear shortly. Gender bias has been removed from curricula and teaching materials.

The latest initiative of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao- “save daughters educate daughters” campaign, aims at ensuring safety and quality education for girls. The objective is to improve the child sex ratio.

Madam Chair,

The process of elaboration of post 2015 Development agenda has provided us a unique and golden opportunity to revitalize our efforts and accelerate progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. The comprehensive template of action presented in the SDGs already makes a significant departure from the silo approach of the past and we welcome the inclusion of a strong goal on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls and quality education for all.

Experience from the MDGs shows that gender equality, women's empowerment and promotion and protection of women's rights catalyze a shift in societies towards economic development, social stability and promotes greater equilibrium between societies and nature.

Gender equality and women's empowerment is a cross-cutting theme that impinges on our goals for eradication of poverty and sustainable development. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into relevant aspects of the development agenda is therefore critical for accelerated progress in achievement of all other development goals and overcoming challenges in all 12 critical areas of the Platform of Action.

We must also recognize that women are the worst affected by poverty and lack of economic opportunities, and therefore, they should be the first beneficiaries of inclusive development.

A robust development-centric agenda that reduces poverty, improves education, boosts inclusive economic growth, promotes resilient infrastructure, and accelerates access to modern energy and enabling use of ICT is the best guarantee for women's empowerment.

An important aspect in empowerment and development of women is also the enhanced use of enabling technologies, in particular information and communications technology in education, healthcare, clean drinking water, and energy, to significantly empower their role as force-multipliers in society and bring about structural transformation in the lives of millions of women across the world.

A development-centered and poverty-focused agenda therefore is the first premise of promoting women's empowerment.

With the SDGs in place, what is now needed is political will to act decisively and implement the Post-2015 Development Agenda with the imperative of gender equality and empowerment at the heart of our efforts.

Thank you