

STATEMENT BY MR. TARIQ ANWAR, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER
OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 60: PROMOTION AND
PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF
THE 63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON
OCTOBER 16, 2008



Mr. Chairman,

Let me thank the UN Secretary-General for his reports under the Agenda item 60 "Promotion and protection of the rights of children", including the report of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict.

Mr Chairman,

We have proclaimed that we will protect the world for our children, by taking care of every child and making the "world fit for children". We have given ourselves attainable targets for the overall development of children, not just

physically, psychologically and spiritually, but also socially, cognitively and culturally. Unfortunately, Mr Chairman, while some progress has been made, we have not met all our targets as expected.

In the recent review of the Millennium Development Goals, the gap between the targets and actual progress, especially in some pockets of the world has become evident. While enrolments in primary schools have increased, there are still more than 73 million children who are not receiving any kind of formal primary education. Similarly, the level of enrolment at secondary schools remains low. Only 53 % of the children of the appropriate age are able to make it to secondary school. This percentage dips to as low as 25 % in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr Chairman,

In the health sector too, progress has not been uniform. While the under-five mortality has been reduced to less than 10 million, last year, a considerable number of countries will not be able to meet the goal of two-thirds reduction by 2015. This is because, the primary causes of under-five mortality have not been addressed appropriately. Dealing with larger issues like poverty eradication, providing safe drinking water, clean environment, etc, will also enable the effective implementation of children specific programmes.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the efforts by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children in Armed Conflict in studying the problems of children affected by armed conflict and suggesting recommendations and initiatives to protect and promote their rights and integrate them in the society. However, it is most disheartening that more than 2 million children have lost their lives in conflict zones and another 6 million have been permanently disabled. The international community has a responsibility to see that the problem of children in situations of armed conflict is addressed as a matter of high priority.

Mr. Chairman,

India is fully committed to the development of every child, and ensuring his or her rights and protection in our country. A major programme towards achieving this objective is the ongoing flagship programme called the 'Integrated Child Development Services'. This programme seeks to provide for the holistic development of children below 6 years of age and caters to pregnant and lactating mothers by a multi-pronged approach. Currently, this programme has 41 million beneficiaries. A new pilot Scheme 'Conditional Cash Transfer for Girl Child with Insurance Cover' wherein cash transfers will be made to the family of the girl child on fulfilling certain specific conditions besides providing insurance

coverage, has been launched this year. Another new programme, namely 'Integrated Child Protection Scheme' with a view to create an environment for the comprehensive development of children and contribute to the well-being of children in difficult circumstances, has also been launched this year.

Mr. Chairman,

We have also revised some provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, in order to ensure uniformity and to facilitate the task of State Governments. Guidelines to combat child prostitution have also been developed. Moreover, India has enacted the Commissions for Protection of the Child Rights Act 2005 and as envisaged in the Act, has already set up the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights last year. This Commission will deal with all matters related to children for proper enforcement of children's rights and effective implementation of laws and programmes relating to children.

India is also working towards formalising Child Budgeting procedure, whereby, government's budgetary allocations and actual expenditures on sectors that have an impact on children's well-being will be analysed. This will provide crucial insights into the deficiencies in public policy towards children in India. With its Universal Elementary Education Scheme (*Sarva Siksha Abhiyan*), India has been able to reduce the number of out-of-school children. In order to attain universal education, the government has allocated 6% of India's GDP for the period 2007 to 2012, towards education.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, I would like to reiterate India's commitment to work towards not only complete realisation of the goals of 'A World Fit for Children' as well as the related Millennium Development Goals but also higher standards through our domestic policies.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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