

**STATEMENT BY MRS. SUTAPA MAJUMDAR, DIRECTOR, PLANNING
COMMISSION OF INDIA ON FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT AND THE 24TH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY –
PRORITY THEME: POVERTY ERADICATION AT THE 49TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ON FEBRUARY 11, 2011**

Mr Chairman,

Let me begin by extending on behalf of the delegation of India, our warmest felicitations to you on your election and also to other members of the Bureau. Let me assure you our full cooperation and support in the deliberations of this Commission. We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his various reports to this Commission. We broadly associate ourselves with the statement made by the delegation of Argentina on behalf of G-77 and China.

Mr Chairman,

Poverty eradication is one of the three mutually reinforcing and interdependent pillars of social development, as identified more than sixteen years ago at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995. This, along with productive and decent employment for all and social integration through inclusive growth is the keystone for any nation's inclusive, equitable and sustained socio-economic development. The priority theme of this year's Commission, 'poverty eradication' is an important area of concern for developing countries, in their march towards the fulfillment of their commitment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With less than five years remaining for the deadline of MDGs, MDG 1 of eradication of extreme poverty and hunger still remains one of the most challenging goals to attain.

Mr Chairman,

In India, we have been consolidating the gains achieved in the field of poverty eradication since our independence to ensure that no one is left behind. India's economic growth has been growing at a steady high pace since the launch of economic liberalization policy in the early 1990s. Moreover, Indian economy showed high resilience during the recent financial and economic crises. This sustained growth rate has resulted in economic prosperity and has also propelled India as one of the major economies of the world.

Mr Chairman,

Poverty cannot be eradicated merely by economic growth and employment; instead programme, policies and strategies should also focus on other important elements of social development, including, education, health, rural development, empowerment of women, good governance and environmental sustainability. We are in the final phase of the implementation of our 11th Five Year Development Plan covering the period 2007-12. The key focus of the Plan is inclusive growth. Our endeavor is to ensure that the gains of economic growth reach all sections of our population. In this context our special efforts to ensure that rural India, where the vast majority of our huge population lives, derives direct benefit from the growth dividend. As a result, in the 11th Five Year Plan, our approach has been to set a target for economic growth, along with 26 measurable indices of performance relating to poverty, education, health, women and children. We have found that advances are most evident where targeted interventions have been initiated, and where increased funding and improved institutional mechanism have stimulated better delivery of services and tools directly to those in need. Furthermore, to ensure efficient and timely implementation of the accompanying projects and programmes, these targets are disaggregated at the level of the States which implement many of the programmes.

Mr Chairman,

In this Plan, the strategy for poverty eradication with greater inclusiveness involves several interrelated components. These are: (i) a continuation of the policies of economic reform which have created a buoyant and competitive private sector, (ii) a revival in agricultural growth which is the most important single factor affecting rural prosperity, (iii) improved access to essential services in health and education (including skill development) especially for the poor, which is essential to ensure inclusiveness and also to support rapid growth, (iv) a special thrust on infrastructure development which is a critical area for accelerating growth, (v) environmental sustainability which is becoming increasingly important, (vi) special attention to the needs of disadvantaged groups, and (vii) good governance at all levels: centre, state, and local.

Mr Chairman,

As part of realization of this Plan, we have been funding and implementing many national schemes. These include schemes like Education for All and the Mid Day Meal Scheme, Village Electrification Programme, Housing Programme, Rural Road Programme, the Integrated Child Development Services, the National Social Assistance Programme, the Total Sanitation Campaign, the Accelerated Rural Drinking Water Programme, and two new 11th Plan initiatives - the National Rural Health Mission and the National Health Insurance Programme. This Plan has also paid special focus on gender dimension of inclusiveness in economic development along with special attention on the vulnerable and marginalised sections of society. Consequently, there are several programmes specifically targeted to the needs of the women, vulnerable groups and minorities.

Mr Chairman,

Our flagship programme for social integration, rural employment generation, poverty eradication, financial inclusion and rural economic development is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural

Employment Guarantee Scheme. This programme is perhaps the world's largest work programme which ensures 100 days employment to every rural household and improves wage levels. In the field of education, India has already attained cent percent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in primary grades of schooling for both boys and girls. It is only indicative of steady progress to universal primary education. India has also emerged as one of the major development partners for fostering techno-economic and intellectual assistance to various developed and developing countries across the world.

Mr Chairman,

In order to increase the pace of poverty eradication, in this Plan we had kept a target of reducing the percentage of the population below the poverty line by ten percentage points during 2007-12. This is also, perhaps, the most important marker for us, to measure the inclusive growth. In the mid-term appraisal of the 11th Plan last year, we were heartened to find that these efforts have produced progress towards the objectives intended. Rates of enrolment in primary schools have increased. Gender gaps in schooling have narrowed. Life expectancy and rates of immunization of children have increased. The percentage of population with access to safe drinking water has also gone up and so have village connectivity and electrification as well as development of telecommunication. Nevertheless, the task ahead of us is still enormous.

Mr Chairman,

Our ultimate objective should be broad based improvement in the quality of life of all people. Comprehensive and inclusive social development is essential for fostering a stable, safe, harmonious peaceful and just society. Moreover, it has to be coherent and people centric.

As we are implementing the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017), let me join all the other delegations in reaffirming our commitment to continue to implement it by creating an enabling environment by pursuing policies of social justice, social development, economic growth and sustainable development for all.

I thank you, Mr Chairman.

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