

**STATEMENT BY MR.S. JAIPAL REDDY, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT ON  
AGENDA ITEM 88: OPERATION ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT AT THE  
SECOND COMMITTEE OF 57<sup>TH</sup> UNGA ON OCTOBER 28, 2002**

Mr. Chairman,

We thank the Secretary General for the Reports and the Note prepared for the agenda item on Operational Activities for Development.

2. We wish to take the opportunity of this debate to share with other member States our thoughts on the currently reigning doctrine of development cooperation: the rights-based approach. India is often identified among the countries that pioneered the rights-based approach to development and it may, therefore, seem ironical that we should be discussing the limitations of and fallacies inherent in this reigning orthodoxy. What we question, however, is not the rights-based approach but the rights-based approach to development cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

3. For India, a rights-based approach in public policy is a moral imperative. The aims of social, economic and political justice as well as the principles of equality of status and of opportunity are enshrined in the preamble of our Constitution. The laws and policies of our land seek to translate these commitments into reality; including through affirmative action that seek to provide a balanced playing field for women, the impoverished and the most vulnerable. They also seek to bring about equity in decision-making in relation to the development process and in the sharing of the fruits of development through local self-government and the delegation of powers to the village and municipal levels. Our economic policies are

directed not merely towards the objective of economic growth but are aimed at bringing about growth with equity, sustainable development and the fulfillment of basic needs. The central elements of our approach were determined in 1950 when we adopted our Constitution. They were, in relation to development policy, conditioned, to a large extent, by our experience with the colonial model of economic development. We chose at that time to not adopt a path of authoritative egalitarianism by which political and civil liberties would have been sacrificed for the promise of the fulfilment of physical needs. For us, the protection and promotion of fundamental rights and the empowerment of our people were and will always remain a sacred duty.

4. Our achievements with regard to poverty eradication, despite the huge challenges which remain, have, we feel, been impressive. We have learnt from our development experience that normative and legalistic frameworks that address empowerment do not by themselves lead to poverty eradication. Poverty has inextricable linkages with resource endowment and with historical and geographical factors. Capacity building and human resource development which address the human, physical and financial asset base of the poor are, in fact, essential for poverty eradication.

Mr. Chairman,

5. The rights-based approach to development cooperation seeks to introduce a rights based approach to public policy from outside and bring about empowerment through the

planning, programming and implementation activities of a donor agency. It is our view that a rights based approach to public policy is most desirable. It needs, however, to come from within. Movement away from political, economic or social oppression can only be sustainable when it springs from within a society and is in harmony with local culture and values. The rights- based approach to development cooperation seeks to bring about empowerment through external pressure and is based on the dogma that all that is required for poverty eradication is 'good' leadership, 'good governance' and the empowerment of ordinary people. This is patronizing to say the least, as it is based on the assumption that good governance is the only missing link between national poverty reduction intentions and actual poverty reduction. The underlying approach seems to be of moral superiority of the donor and also of superiority with regard to insights into what would be in the best interests of the South. It could, even be insulting, because, very often it is based on the premise that the people of the South elect leaders who are corrupt, uncaring and inefficient.

Mr. Chairman,

6. I challenge these premises. I am an elected Member of Parliament. I have spent 33 years in various legislatures and this is my fifth term in Parliament. I would really wonder why anybody should assume that the 1.2 million voters in my electorate, or more generally the people of my country, are simplistic and unaware of their own best interests.

Mr. Chairman,

7. We also have a practical problem with the rights-based approach to development cooperation. We find, very often, that it seeks to limit development cooperation to advice, advocacy and monitoring. Instead of providing basic needs, developing human resources and building capacities, it confines itself to

enforcement approaches which concern themselves only with processes for the registration of claims. Moving away from the technical assistance and capacity building model to a human rights model is, in our view, to exercise the easy option. It does not, however, by itself, lead to the fulfilment of the economic, social and cultural rights of the poor.

8. India has always attached the highest importance to the ethical dimensions of public policy. We do so for the policy of development cooperation as well. It is important, in our view, to have moral clarity on questions of who should take decisions about the direction in which a society should develop, on who should determine its economic, social and cultural goals, on who should decide the strategies to be employed to achieve these goals and on who should arbitrate on questions relating to the division of the burdens and the benefits of development. Should it be the donor agency which comes from abroad or should it be the elected government which is both representative and accountable?

Mr. Chairman,

9. I shall attempt to summarise what I have said. India is committed to the protection and promotion of human rights. We do not believe, however, that commitment to human rights can be, or should be introduced through the leverage of a donor agency. Development cooperation should address itself to upgrading the human, physical and financial asset base of the poor. This would be an invaluable contribution for the fulfilment of their human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

10. We have carefully read the Secretary General's report on the Pledging Conference. We are, very frankly, not at all convinced by the arguments which have been advanced.

Our delegation is in consultation with other members of the Group of 77 on this subject. We would, however, take this opportunity to say to the donor community that we see the Pledging Conference not as an enforcement mechanism or one to exercise any kind of pressure. The Conference can, we feel, provide a clearly visible platform for reaffirming commitment to human rights and poverty eradication. We are, of course, aware that for many donors, development assistance through the operational activities of the UN system constitutes only a fraction of their commitment to the goal of poverty eradication. This does not, in our view, detract from the utility of the Conference. The Pledging Conference can, it seems to us, also be useful in

helping developing countries and the UN system to understand better the views of the donor community on the overall direction being taken by the Funds and Programmes of the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

11. I shall, because of limitations of time, not address in this statement the report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on its activities in 2001. My delegation has already addressed issues relating to UNIFEM's activities in the debate which took place in the Third Committee on Agenda items 102 and 103.