

STATEMENT BY DR. RATNA DE, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, ON AGENDA ITEM 65 [A] : PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILDREN AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 66TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 13, 2011

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, please allow me to thank the Secretary General, his Special Representatives and Special Rapporteur for their reports under agenda item 65. I would also like to thank the previous speakers for their useful and informative presentations under this agenda item.



Mr. Chairman,

The Government of India accords the highest priority to ensuring that the rights of children in India are protected. Nineteen percent of the world's children are Indian. The age group 0-18 years constitutes 44% of our population. We have put in place a comprehensive legal and institutional framework to protect and promote their rights and their well being.

A National Charter for Children has been adopted. Free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years has been declared a fundamental right. As part of the public-private partnership, even private schools have to reserve 25%

of seats to children from economically weaker sections of the society with budgetary support from the government. A National Plan of Action for Children has also been adopted. One flagship programme, namely the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme, focused on early childhood care and education caters annually to around 75 million children under 6 years of age. The Government of India is committed to creating, through these and other initiatives, a protective environment for children.

In this connection, I would also like to point out that civil society in India is an integral and active part of this framework. We consider civil society to be a valued partner in our national and international efforts on children's issues.

Mr. Chairman,

Violence against children must be strictly condemned and vigilantly and actively monitored. Ending exploitation and violence against children is fundamental to ensuring a healthy future for every child. In this regard, India has set up a National Commission for the Protection of Child's Rights in 2007 to provide speedy trial of offenders committing crimes against children and violating the rights of children.

We are encouraged to note that the Special Representative for Violence against Children will devote special attention in the forthcoming period, inter alia, to further consolidating regional mechanisms on violence against children and continuing the series of expert consultations on violence-related topics.

Mr. Chairman,

The eradication of child labour in all occupations and industries is one of the most important priorities of the Government of India. We are strictly enforcing a ban on employment of children under 14 years of age. Cognizant of the fact that this problem cannot be divorced from its social conditions, we are addressing this issue in a holistic manner by implementing measures to improve access to education, health and nutrition for children. The National Human Rights Commission and civil society, including non-Governmental organisations, have been supplementing the Government's efforts in the eradication of child labour in the country.

Mr. Chairman,

In 2009, the government of India launched a new scheme called the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) to create a safe environment for children in need of care and protection, children in conflict and contact with law and any other

vulnerable child. This scheme brought under one umbrella several existing schemes of child protection, namely, a) A Programme for Juvenile Justice; b) An Integrated Programme for Street Children; and c) Scheme for Assistance to Homes to Promote In-country Adoption.

The primary focus of this new scheme is to provide quality and better accessible child protection services; to raise public awareness about child rights; to clearly articulate responsibilities and enforced accountability for child protection; and to establish functioning structures at all government levels for delivery of statutory and support services to children in difficult times.

Mr. Chairman,

Today, a special mention of the girl child deserves our attention. The girl child is one of the most vulnerable members of any society. A number of initiatives to enhance the status of the girl child have been initiated in India, such as effective policies to ban sex selective abortion and child marriage. Since 2009, every year, January 24 is marked as "National Girl Child Day" in India to highlight the different problems faced by the girl child and the need to spread gender sensitization amongst various sections of the society.

Mr. Chairman,

India is fully committed to the rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. India is a signatory to the six core human rights covenants, and also the two Optional Protocols to the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

India's commitment to children and their welfare and development is manifest in our commitment and ongoing efforts to meet the goals of the outcome document "A World fit for Children" and the related Millennium Development Goals. We have made much progress. Yet, a lot more needs to be accomplished.

Children are our future. India will continue to take measures to ensure that children are able to grow and develop in safe environments that will lead to healthy and productive adult lives. India will continue to strive to achieve the full realization of the potential and value in every child-boy and girl.

Mr. Chairman,

The child is an instrumental stakeholder in the social contract. Let us reaffirm our commitment to promotion and protection of the rights of our children.

Thank You

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)