

Agenda Item 68:  
'Promotion and Protection of Human Rights'  
(a) Implementation of Human Rights Instruments,  
(d) Comprehensive Implementation of and follow-up to the  
Vienna Declarations and Programme of Action

18 October 2016

**INDIA STATEMENT**

First Secretary Dr. Vishnuvardhan Reddy at the  
Third Committee of the 71<sup>st</sup> Session of the  
United Nations General Assembly

**Thank you Madam Chair,**

My delegation thanks the Secretary General and the Treaty bodies for their respective reports under this agenda item. We also thank the High Commissioner for Human Rights for his report summarizing the activities undertaken by his Office in the last one year.

**Madam Chair**

2. We have repeatedly emphasized that all human rights are universal and should be treated with equal emphasis without any hierarchy.

3. Yet, even as we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of both ICCPR and ICESR this year, we find that the civil and political rights are highlighted often at the expense of socio-economic rights. Such selective approach that also disregards the collective dimensions of human rights remains a major challenge in the effective implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

4. The Right to Development recognizes development as a process through which all human rights are realized and provides a balanced framework for implementation of both the ICCPR and ICESR. As the High Commissioner has pointed out in his report, the right to development is also inextricably linked to the ambitious Agenda 2030 and provides a vital and enabling environment for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is imperative that sufficient resources are allocated for the promotion, protection and fulfillment of this inalienable human right.

**Madam Chair,** with respect to UN human rights mechanisms, we wish to highlight the following:

5. First, we note with concern that while we face multiple challenges to the promotion and protection of human rights, which require our concerted efforts, we are witnessing increasing politicization and selective utilization of the UN human rights machinery.

6. Ironically, this trend is most evident in the Human Rights Council, which is supposed to be the main platform for enabling a constructive dialogue and cooperation on all human rights issues. Only strict adherence to the principles of impartiality, non-selectivity and objectivity and focus on universally recognized rights can ensure collective ownership of the UN human rights agenda and deliver effective solutions.

7. It is also important to respect the distinct mandate of different mechanisms and avoid duplication of efforts.

**Madam Chair,**

8. Second, we have noted the High Commissioner's 'Change Initiative' to streamline the work of OHCHR. We, however, believe that there is a need for a more consultative and inclusive approach in identifying the thematic priorities of the Office to enhance the ownership, relevance and uptake of its activities.

9. Third, we wish to emphasize that States remain the primary duty bearers and that the most effective way to address human right challenges is through strengthening national institutions and mechanisms. OHCHR's field presence should be based on a cooperative arrangement with the state concerned and primarily aim at capacity building. Intrusive monitoring and 'naming and shaming' only complicates things, undermines national efforts and is counter-productive.

10. Fourth, the recommendations of the JIU review on the governance and management of OHCHR should be earnestly pursued to address some of the longstanding issues related to the funding, staffing, transparency and accountability of OHCHR.

11. Lastly, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) has established itself as a platform for genuine dialogue and cooperation on human rights situations in all countries without any distinction. Universality and equal treatment should continue to be its guiding principles and we should avoid tendencies to turn UPR into a platform for pushing selective human rights agenda. We understand that OHCHR is developing a comprehensive UPR recommendations implementation plan. To uphold the spirit of the UPR process the focus of this implementation plan should be on '*accepted recommendations*' that takes into account the capacities and specific national circumstances.

**Madam Chair,**

12. We wish to conclude by reiterating India's abiding commitment to human rights. Our civilizational ethos, strong constitutional safeguards and progressive institutions guarantee an enabling environment for realization of all human rights.

13. Government of India's motto of '*sabka saath, sabka vikas*' (meaning "together with all and development for all) is a clear expression of our commitment to achieve inclusive development in the spirit of 'leaving no one behind'.

14. We stand ready to constructively engage with the international community in fostering a global culture of respect for all human rights for all.

I thank you.