

Agenda Item 27 : Advancement of Women

10 October 2016

INDIA STATEMENT

Counsellor Mr. Mayank Joshi, at the
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United Nations General Assembly

Madam Chair,

Women play a critical role in the economic growth and development and have a significant impact on family & households, communities, society and national economies.

Their contribution has a positive and enlightening impact on lives of men and children. They are agents of social change and they bring cohesiveness in the society.

A significant improvement has been achieved in the lives of women globally over the past few decades resulting from efforts towards the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action and the Millennium Declaration Goals. The efforts and support of the United Nations and UN Women have been key catalyst in this endeavor.

However, the progress has not been uniform and women still are the poorest, least educated, lack health and are marginalized segment of population. Women are disproportionately affected by the evils of human trafficking, armed conflict, climate disasters and economic crisis. Poverty eradication is the greatest challenge for ensuring women a place of dignity and well-being in the society. Violence against women continues to be a serious violation of human rights.

The 2030 Agenda and its sustainable development goals cannot be achieved by ignoring the rights, dignity and capabilities of half of humanity. Women have a crucial role to play to bring in the transformative change we have envisioned in the 2030 Agenda.

Madam Chair,

India accords high priority to gender equality and empowerment of women. Our Constitution conveys a powerful mandate for equality and rights of women in its Preamble. India has been at the forefront of multilateral action in the implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and is committed to fulfill its obligations under the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW and the Rights of the Child.

A number of initiatives have been taken to empower women economically, socially, legally and politically. Gender mainstreaming has been successfully integrated in our governance system. I would like to highlight some important steps taken in these areas.

Firstly, the National Policy for Women is being updated to establish a solid foundation to accelerate our commitment made in the 17 SDGs.

Secondly, economic empowerment of women and their involvement in the fight against poverty is a high priority. India has enacted various financial inclusion and income generation policies and programmes with women as the main and central beneficiaries. The largest women Self-help group network and that 80% of the loans under the "Mudra micro-credit" scheme are utilized by women, reflects the successful outreach of these schemes.

Thirdly, reservation of one third of total seats for women in local and urban self-governments has been a landmark achievement aimed at political empowerment of women. Many states have extended reservation for women in local government to one half of the total seats. Today, more than 1.5 million women participate in decision making at local level.

Fourthly is the area of education. India has achieved gender parity in primary education. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's flagship campaign "Beti bachao, beti padhao- The save daughters, educate daughters" is in Mission mode. Sukanya Samridhi Account Scheme caters to the planning of education and future of girls. These programmes aim at changing the mind-set and removing the centuries-old bias.

Fifthly, health is another priority area with focus on adolescent, maternal and child health. Direct cash-benefit and incentives schemes and various health programmes aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality rates ensure improved nutrition and access to quality healthcare services. The maternity leave has been enhanced to 26 weeks so that mother can take better care of her child.

Sixthly, India has amended and enacted a number of legislations to combat violence against women and sexual harassment at the workplace and in society. Provisions have been made for One stop centers and women helplines. Adequate safeguards are available under existing laws including the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, to deal with misuse of legal provisions, if any. With the enacting of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2009, child marriage is a cognizable and non-bailable offence. Public-interface has been made more gender sensitive with 33% reservation for women in police force. India is closely working with UN women to include gender perspective in the mega project to build "smart and safe cities".

Women are most affected by human trafficking. We are in the process of bringing our national legislation on trafficking in line with international commitments and obligations.

Madam Chair,

While the international community collaborates to transform the current development models into a sustainable future through synergizing men and women capabilities, we must continue to respect the diversity in culture, social norms, traditions and difference in levels of development in our actions.

The international community needs to act now in solidarity to achieve an equal, harmonious, peaceful and inclusive society, where men and women live in equality, mutual respect, recognition and harmony and be equal partners in sustainable development. India is fully committed to these objectives and the full implementation of the Beijing deceleration and the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development.

I thank you.