

Statement by Mrs. Rajani Patil, Member of Parliament & Member of the Indian Delegation, on Agenda Item 69: “Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (A) Implementation of Human Rights Instruments, (D) Comprehensive Implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action” at the Third Committee of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on October 22, 2013

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to thank the UN Secretary-General for his reports as well as the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteurs for their reports under this agenda item relating to ‘protection and promotion of human rights’.



Mr. Chairman,

Human rights are at the core of any free democratic society. They form an important institutional pillar of the United Nations. The promotion and protection of human rights within the United Nations was put on a firm footing with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. Since then, we have come a long way in our collective endeavour to promote and protect human rights.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We attach great importance to the work undertaken by the OHCHR and encourage it to continue to carry out its mandate in an objective and non-selective manner.

The OHCHR has the responsibility to demonstrate that it is independent and impartial by being open, fair, transparent and accountable to all stakeholders. It is important to maintain the representative character and financial independence of this office. It remains a matter of concern that only one-third of OHCHR funding

comes from the regular budget, whereas two-third of the funding comes from voluntary contributions.

Mr. Chairman,

The Human Rights Council is an important body that the international community has carefully constructed to strengthen the protection of human rights globally. We must consciously ensure that Council continues to function in a non-selective, non-politicized and transparent manner. We believe that we can advance our common cause only through dialogue and cooperation.

The mechanism of the Universal Periodic Review has emerged as an extremely useful mechanism for the Human Rights Council and the international community to engage in an open discussion on human rights in member countries. This unique Member-State driven process of peer review, enriched by contributions from the civil society, has been a successful collaborative and constructive endeavour.

The human rights treaty bodies play an important role in assessing the implementation of the treaty obligations by the State parties. We support the ongoing intergovernmental process that aims to make the human rights treaty body system more coherent, coordinated and effective. We are thankful to the co-facilitators of the process as well as OHCHR and civil society for their contributions. We remain committed to actively supporting a consensus outcome of this process.

Mr. Chairman,

As we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action this year, we would like to recall that the Vienna Declaration had reaffirmed the Right to Development as a universal and inalienable right, as well as an integral part of fundamental rights.

At RIO+20, the international community renewed its commitment to sustainable development, recognizing poverty eradication to be the greatest global challenge.

While States have the primary responsibility to promote the Right to Development, one cannot disregard the imperative of international cooperation, which is essential for the purpose of creating a supporting environment for the genuine realization of the Right to Development.

Mr. Chairman,

We are yet to realize the objective of a global culture of human rights, which can serve as a unifying force rather than a divisive force. A major challenge is to determine the most effective approach for promotion and protection of human rights, especially in instances of gross and systematic violations of human rights. Such violations anywhere in the world must certainly be addressed by the international community promptly, impartially, collectively and effectively with the objective to encourage concerned member States to undertake necessary measures to address the human rights situation.

Mr. Chairman,

As a State Party to the principal covenants on human rights, and of practically all other major human rights instruments, India is committed to the promotion and protection of human rights of its citizens.

The State policy is underpinned by our democratic, pluralistic and secular polity, an independent and impartial judiciary, a vibrant civil society, a free media and independent national human rights institution.

Let me highlight some important measures undertaken by us in this area. The Right to Information Act 2005 has empowered the ordinary citizens through access to information on government action leading to a more transparent and accountable governance.

The government has enacted several landmark legislations guaranteeing basic rights in the areas of work and employment, education and food security. These include the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005, the Right to Education Act of 2009 and most recently, the National Food Security Act of 2013.

The innovative mechanism of public interest litigations crafted by the judiciary ensured that even the most vulnerable sections of society, who may not be able to approach courts otherwise, can seek justice via a public-spirited person or organization. This mechanism has been extremely effective in providing remedies to vulnerable groups.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, we are confident that India's focus on fundamental human rights nationally as well as our active participation and contribution to human rights related issues, both in UN and other fora, would make the world a better place to live in.

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