

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MANJEEV SINGH PURI, DEPUTY  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA TO THE UN AT THE  
ANNUAL SESSION OF EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UN WOMEN IN NEW  
YORK ON JUNE 25, 2013**

Mr. President, my felicitations to the Acting Head of UN Women Madam Lakshmi Puri for an extremely informative statement and I would also complement UN Women for an insightful report on the progress made on the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women Strategic Plan 2011 - 2013, which has been placed for consideration before the Board.

Mr. President, before I delve into the substance of my remarks, let me place on record my delegation's sincerest appreciation for the dynamic leadership provided by the former ED of UN Women, Madam Michel Bachelet in the nearly three years, she spent guiding this entity from nascence to its fruition, as we see today. Her innings will be long remembered for giving not just direction and support but for having achieved significant milestones in a very short tenure.

When we embarked upon the Strategic Plan of UN Women in June 2010, we had called for it, to be '*ambitious, achievable and results oriented*'. Today, in the third operational year of UN Women, my delegation is happy to note that UN Women has been able to significantly influence policy narratives across the globe in areas ranging from political participation and leadership, economic empowerment, ending violence against women and gender equality.

However, we still have a long way to go in our common pursuit for ensuring women's economic empowerment. Mr. President, even today women bear a disproportionate burden of the world's poverty and constitute nearly 70% of the world's poor and despite estimates that they perform approximately 66% of the world's work and produce approximately 50% of the food, they only earn 10% of the income and own only 1% of the property. Promoting the empowerment of women must therefore be a key economic development imperative.

Mr. President, representing a country which is home to more than 500 million women, let me submit, that women's economic and political empowerment has been the cornerstone of our policy making, all along. More so, when 69% of our total women population (*nearly 405 million women*) reside in the rural areas alone. It is in this context, that contribution of rural women to our GDP growth and their central role in poverty reduction has been a key guiding factor in the framing of our national policies.

Economic empowerment of Indian women at the grass roots level, especially through 4.8 million women led Self-Help Groups (SHG's) has been a hall mark of India's success story. Covering over 97 million beneficiaries, these have

provided microfinance, employment and livelihood, and have made a defining change in the lives of millions of Indian women at the village level.

I am also pleased to inform you that India has the highest numbers globally, of political empowerment of women at the local level. We have nearly 1.5 million elected women representatives at the local grassroots level, an all time record anywhere, which epitomises the scale at which the landscape of political empowerment of women in India is rapidly changing.

Mr. President, allow me to flag a couple of key issues on the main agenda of the Annual session of the Executive Board and on the next Strategic Plan for UN Women 2014 - 2017.

First, we welcome the consultative and interactive nature of the process that has been followed so far by taking into account views of member states in crafting the Strategic Plan. It has an extremely laudable and ambitious vision statement, which my delegation fully endorses: *"Making this Century for Women and Gender Equality"* and I wish you all success in making it a reality. We hope that as you move further forward on the Strategic Plan, the recommendations of the QCPR on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment would be factored in the Strategic Plan and it would be QCPR consistent, and,

Second, work on gender equality and empowerment of women continues to remain chronically underfunded. If we have to ensure that UN Women stands for action, the donor community must move beyond the political rhetoric of just stated commitments, and transform them into the much needed monetary support for the organization. A fact pointed out in Para- 24 of ED's report states that OECD-DAC aid commitments for gender equality fell by 19 percent from US\$25.3 billion in 2009-2010 to \$20.5 billion per year in 2010-2011. We hope that this would be addressed sooner than later, and tomorrow's pledging event would witness a correction in this trend.

We also appreciate the financials outlined in the draft of the integrated budget 2014 - 2015, and fully endorse the way forward as proposed by the President earlier today.

Let me conclude Mr. President, by quoting Margaret Thatcher, when she said: *" In politics if you want anything SAID ask a man. If you want anything DONE, ask a woman"*.

We believe that in UN Women, you have the where withal to have 'anything done' for the cause of women globally.

We reaffirm India's steadfast commitment to the all round social, economic and political empowerment of our women, whatever effort and resources, the task might take. We assure you that India will always be willing to walk the extra mile, as UN Women embarks upon this journey.

Let me also re-iterate that as part of our stated commitment of five million US dollars to UN Women's core predictable funding, India has already contributed three million US dollars to UN Women, so far and we will continue to provide

full political and financial support to UN Women and call on others to do likewise.

Thank You.

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