

Statement by Ambassador Bhagwant Singh Bishnoi, Deputy Permanent Representative, on General Debate of the Second Committee of the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on October 08, 2015

Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your assumption of charge of the Second Committee this year.

You are taking over the helm of this important deliberative organ of the United Nations at a momentous time. While once-in-a-generation negotiations on a new development agenda for the coming decade and more as well as its financing framework are behind us, now is the time to put in place the nuts and bolts of the implementation framework.

In this session of the Committee, we will take the first collective steps towards setting up the infrastructure of implementation. This framework in turn will play a crucial role in determining the extent to which we are able to attain the objectives we have set for ourselves.

Mr. President,

We have a path-breaking template of action to guide our work. This template represents a decisive and significant break from the past. It will require fresh thinking unencumbered from past precedents. It will also require fresh mindsets and the ability to embrace change.

This we believe, is a time of great opportunities as well as risks. Rededicating ourselves to ending poverty and hunger within a generation, as our Leaders have promised, the task before us will be to maximize the opportunities and minimize the risks¹.

We see in particular 3 opportunities and 3 risks. In many ways they are intertwined. Not handled well, the opportunities can transform into challenges and the risks themselves contain the seeds of opportunities in them.

The first opportunity is that of retooling. Retooling of the national systems of implementation and review of progress, of the operational machinery of the UN system, and of the norm-setting deliberative organs of the UN including this Committee.

The other opportunity is presented by the universality of the agenda. It is no more for developing countries alone. Its implementation will require effective implementation in developed countries as well. This is an unprecedented opportunity to reimagine international cooperation and restructure its operational details so that we can maximize synergies and harness complementarities.

The third opportunity is presented by the combining of objectives and instruments within the agenda. The 2030 agenda is unique in that it integrates instruments to achieve the objectives along side the objectives themselves. Goal 17 and the goal-specific

means of implementation along side goals 8 and 9 contain the seeds of the success of the agenda and must receive enhanced attention.

Mr. President,

In terms of risks, the foremost is that of ‘cherry picking’. As Prof. Abhijit Bannerjee the keynote speaker yesterday cautioned, there is a risk that the agenda may be perceived as over ambitious. In doing so, there is a risk of selective importance being given to pet issues in implementation. It is particularly important that the UN system avoids such cherry picking of issues from within the agenda.

The second risk is that of reinterpretation or subjective interpretation to suit pre-set notions or preferences. It is important that the indivisible and integrated nature of the agenda is not allowed to be subverted by such reinterpretations of its mandate.

Thirdly, while integration is the hallmark of the new agenda and an opportunity, perpetuation of a silo mindset or mal-integration could be a significant risk. Integration does not mean mainstreaming only one of the three dimensions into all others. We have already seen a tendency to over emphasize the environmental lens and undermine the equal salience of the economic and social pillars. This needs to be avoided.

Mr. President,

Effective management of these risks and opportunities will be crucial as we put in place the bricks and mortars of the implementation edifice for the new agenda. We trust in your abilities to ensure that this task is achieved through our collaborative effort.

Mr. President,

Given that we are now collectively working towards the 21st Conference of Parties to the Convention on Climate Change, allow me also to share some thoughts on this important issue.

India has just submitted a very ambitious Intended Nationally Determined Contribution to tackle climate change in the post-2020 period. India’s submission is in line with our firm belief that while we were not a part of the problem, we want to be a part of the solution. Our submission builds on the very significant action we are already undertaking at the national level in the pre-2020 period.

Our overall success in Paris will depend however on equally good-faith efforts by all parties. We are so far not very enthused by the low level of ambition on display by developed countries. If this problem is to be decisively tackled, developed countries will have to take the visible lead by undertaking substantive and ambitious mitigation actions in line with their historical responsibility and greater capacity to act. They will have to demonstrably move their societies onto a path of sustainable consumption and lifestyles.

A lasting agreement will not be achieved by passing the burden of action onto the shoulders of developing countries, nor by undermining the core principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities.

Mr. President,

You can count on the unstinted support of my delegation for the successful conduct of work of this Committee in the weeks ahead.

I thank you.
