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Agenda Item 28: Social Development

INDIA STATEMENT

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Mr. Chairman,

It is my privilege to speak at the UN today as the youth delegate of India.

We join other delegations in congratulating you and the members of the Bureau on your election. We extend full support to the work of the Committee under your able leadership and wish you all the success.

My delegation associates with the statement made by Egypt on behalf of the G77.

Mr. Chairman,

In the face of persistent inequalities, addressing social dimensions of sustainable development is more relevant than ever before. While pursuing an inclusive approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, we must address the emerging challenges from globalization and technological innovations that further accentuate the existing divides.

Mr. Chairman,

Inclusive social development is a priority for India. This is reflected in the motto of 'collective efforts, inclusive development' of the Government.

Sustained economic development in India has lifted millions out of poverty.

India has already rolled out programmes to achieve the SDGs. Financial inclusion and generation of decent employment opportunities for all are at the heart of our development strategy, with special consideration for women, older persons, youth and persons with disabilities.

Digital empowerment has a key role in this. The biometric-based identity system 'Aadhaar' now covers over 90% of the country's population, enhancing access to vital services.

Livelihood security provided through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and financial inclusion through Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) have played catalytic role in improving lives of millions.

320 million people now have bank accounts through the Prime Minister's Jan Dhan Yojana. By leveraging PMJDY, Aadhaar and mobile telephony, the Government has disbursed more than USD 25 billion through Direct Benefit Transfers to more than 300 million beneficiaries and has enhanced efficiency of social security schemes.

Under the 'Mudra' loans programme for micro-to-mini businesses, over 140 million people have taken loans, majority of whom are women.

Family oriented programmes are important for building resilient societies.

As a step towards Universal Health Coverage, Prime Minister has recently launched 'Ayushman Bharat' (Long Live India) programme covering 500 million people, offering social security blanket to 100 million vulnerable families.

Women in India now get 26 weeks of paid leave to care for their newborn, making it one of the longest such leave in the world. Providing crèche facility at organizations having 50 or more employees is now mandatory.

Prime Minister Modi has shown personal commitment in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities through the Accessible India Campaign which promotes barrier-free access in public spaces and in virtual ecosystems.

Pension schemes, free legal aid services, targeted insurance coverage and higher rates of interest on saving, tax rebates, travel discounts and reduced banking charges and preferential banking services contribute to ensuring dignified life for older persons.

Mr. Chairman,

With approximately 26 percent of the world's population under 15 years age and 1.8 billion between the ages of 15-24 years, focusing on empowerment of young people

as well as recognizing their voice and agency in achieving SDGs more relevant than ever before.

India is a 'young' nation, with half of the population under 25 years of age and two thirds under 35 years. The focus is on harnessing this demographic dividend by creating opportunities through skill and entrepreneurship development and by using digital technologies to improve access to information and knowledge.

Through the Skill India campaign industry-relevant training is imparted to increase employability. Stand-up India promotes entrepreneurship through credit availability, with focus on women. Various other programmes under National Youth Policy focus on promotion of healthy lifestyle, social values, engagement community affairs, politics and governance and in voluntary social work, thereby enabling participation of young people in development processes.

Mr. Chairman,

The UN provides a forum to collectively develop strategies that can correct the skewed development at global scale.

India will continue to work with other fellow developing countries through development partnerships to enable them in their pursuit of inclusive sustainable development.

I thank you.