

Statement by Mr. Amit Kumar, Minister, on Agenda Item 3(a): Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the 24th Special Session of the General Assembly – Priority Theme: promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all at the 52nd Session of the UN Commission for Social Development on February 12, 2014

Madam Chair,

At the outset, let me extend on behalf of the delegation of India, our warmest felicitations to you as the Chair and also to other members of the Bureau. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support in guiding the deliberations of this Commission.

We would like to thank the Secretary General for his various reports to this Commission. We associate ourselves with the statement made by the delegation of Bolivia on behalf of G-77.

Madam Chair,

The 1995 Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action was a landmark collective affirmation to achieving social development through appropriate actions to address the three mutually reinforcing and interdependent pillars, namely, poverty eradication; productive and decent employment for all; and social integration through inclusive growth.

This year's priority theme aptly focuses on these three pillars, realization of which is crucial to achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

At the Rio+20 Summit, the international community renewed its commitment to sustainable development, recognizing poverty to be the greatest global challenge. The post-2015 development agenda must continue to prioritize the eradication of poverty as its central objective.

Madam Chair,

In India, our focus is on achieving inclusive growth to ensure that the gains of economic growth reach all sections of our population, in particular the rural population that outnumbered urban population by ratio of 3:2. We are also paying special attention on gender equity issues and for the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized sections of society in our development efforts through specific Government schemes and initiatives.

The government monitors progress in tracking the multi-dimensional economic and social objectives of inclusive growth through identified indices of performance relating to poverty, education, health, women and children, etc. Since States implement many of these programmes and projects, these targets are also disaggregated at the level of the States to ensure their better and timely implementation.

Madam Chair,

Rapid economic growth is necessary to generate the income and employment opportunities that are needed for improving living standards for the bulk of the population as well as to generate the resources needed for financing social sector programmes aimed at reducing poverty and enabling inclusiveness and empowerment.

Our national strategy for achieving faster growth with greater inclusiveness involves several interrelated components. These include: further economic reforms which have created a buoyant and competitive private sector; further strengthening agricultural growth and rural economy which directly affect rural prosperity; improved access to essential services including health and education, skill development, etc, especially for the poor and disadvantaged sections; special thrust on infrastructure development; environmental sustainability; special attention to the needs of disadvantaged groups; and good, participatory, accountable and responsive governance at all levels: centre, state, and local.

Madam Chair,

The Government of India has undertaken a number of initiatives to help and empower socially disadvantaged groups at the grassroots level. Let me mention here one such programme - the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. This programme ensures 100 days employment to every rural household. At least 50% of work is reserved for women and the equal pay mandated for equal work.

This scheme has successfully raised the negotiating power of agricultural labour, resulting in higher agricultural wages and improved economic outcomes leading to reduction in distress migration. It has also helped break down social inequalities, built up rural infrastructure and strengthened rural economy.

Madam Chair,

At the international level, our delegation would like to underline the need for a strengthened and scaled-up global partnership for eradication of poverty, based on national ownership of development strategies. International cooperation must be enhanced including on fulfillment of commitments of internationally agreed official development assistance and on issues related to market access, capacity building and technical support, including technology transfer.

Madam Chair,

Social integration is essential for fostering a stable, safe, harmonious peaceful and just society. Social integration should, however, not be construed as achieving uniformity, but to understand and respect diversity and to promote equal opportunity and participation of all in order to create a 'society for all'.

Mere existence of normative frameworks will not reduce discrimination, cultural biases and violence if they are not complemented by policy measures with strict enforcement. Our ultimate objective should be broad based improvement in the quality of life of all people.

Madam Chair,

In conclusion, let me reaffirm our commitment to creating an enabling environment by pursuing policies of social justice, social development, economic growth and sustainable development for all.

I thank you, Madam Chair.

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