

Statement by Mr. Mayank Joshi, First Secretary on Agenda Item: 29 (a,b) on Advancement of Women at the Third Committee of the 70th Session of the United Nation General Assembly on October 13, 2015

Mr. President,

We thank the Secretary General for his reports under the Agenda item and the distinguished speakers for their informative statements.

To quote from the recently adopted Agenda 2030 :*“The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities”*. We are happy that the universal Agenda 2030 and its SDGs, have recognized and reaffirmed the need for full realization of human rights for all and achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, both as a means, and as well as an end to achieve sustainable development.

Mr. President,

Gender equality and women empowerment are enshrined in the Indian constitution. We strongly believe that social and political empowerment of women is integral to inclusive and sustainable growth and development. Gender perspective has thus been mainstreamed in our national planning and legislations across all sectors, especially the rural, and at all levels. Focus is also on fighting deep rooted social prejudices and stereotypes.

The **political mobilization** of women in India is testified by over 1.5 million elected women representatives in local bodies who are participating in governance and decision making effectively.

The world's largest poverty eradication national programme, the **National Rural Livelihood Mission**, with a central plan outlay for USD 650 million, is helping in uplifting the socio-economic status of women, victims of trafficking and women with disability. An important role is being played in this regard by women led Self-Help Groups which have millions of members.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme, the largest cash transfer schemes, ensures that half jobs generated are reserved for women, and with equal pay as men. Preference is also given to women in the household registration under the affordable housing scheme for poor, and also for the national food security programme.

The recently launched PM's **Jan Dhan Yojana** (public finance scheme) is proving to be an economic breakthrough for thousands of women who urgently required overcoming the vicious cycle of poverty and debt.

The Right to Education Act 2009 and **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan** have universalized access to quality education with Gender Parity indexes of 1 and .95 at primary and upper primary respectively. **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** -Educate daughter save daughter scheme, is focused on educating the girl child and improving the Child sex ratio. Similarly, **Sukanya Samriddhi Yojna** (girl child prosperity) is a special deposit scheme for the girl child with the aim to secure a bright future and welfare of the girl child in India, so that she is not left behind.

The **National Rural Health Mission** programme implemented with the help of **Accredited Social Health Activitis (ASHA)** has contributed considerably to the declining IMM and MMR.

The **Swachh Bharat** “Clean India” campaign initiated by the PM envisions to effect behavioral change regarding hygiene and healthy sanitation practices in public places, including schools, thus contributing to the safety, security and well-being of women and girls.

Towards achieving the goal of their empowerment, women are also being made aware in the legal literacy programmes about their legal rights namely right to property, right to maintenance, right to education, right to be treated equally in employment, labour laws, gender sensitisation etc.

A number of legislations have been put in place for the protection of women, including against all forms of violence, sexual harassment at workplace, human trafficking, prohibition of child marriage and protection of children from sexual offences and exploitation.

Government is also taking steps to overcome structural and underlying causes and risk factors so as to prevent violence against women and girls. These include establishing “**One Stop Centres**” to provide violence affected women a combination of organized interventions in a women-friendly environment and a 24 hour women **helpline**.

Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) are also being set up throughout the country supported by an online portal on information related to trafficking. The comprehensive **Ujjwala scheme** is aimed at prevention of trafficking and rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration and repatriation of victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation has helped over 10000 women annually in the past 2 years.

Efforts are underway towards gender sensitization of public functionaries including police and the judiciary, the civil society and the public through appropriate training and awareness campaigns. New initiatives include envisaging Gender Champion Clubs in educational institutions facilitate an enabling environment within their schools/colleges/academic institutions where girls are treated with dignity and respect.

The most important milestone towards mainstreaming and institutionalizing the Gender Budgeting process in India has been the formation of **Gender Budgeting Cells (GBCs)** in over 57 Ministries, with the objective of serving as a focal point for gender budgeting coordination.

Mr. President,

Innovative technologies including IT are important enablers and multipliers in our efforts. Coupled with judicious use of social media and internet, we can vastly improve the efficacy and reach of the implementation of gender specific strategies globally.

Women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty, globally. In the challenging times of increasing armed-conflict, climate change, economic crises and natural disasters across the world, we need to seize this historic opportunity to re-strategize efforts and strengthen commitments, both political and financial for achieving an equal, poverty-free and sustainable world, and ensuring a life of dignity for all women and girls.

India is committed to work with the international community, the UNsystem, particularly the UN Women as its key partner, and the civil society in **synergizing and full implementation** of the objectives of the outcome of Beijing Declaration and its Platform of Actionand the goals of Agenda 2030.

I thank you.
