

STATEMENT BY DR. GIRIJA VYAS, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 57 – 'ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT ISSUES [A] IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECOND UN DECADE FOR ERADICATION OF POVERTY [2008-2017] [B] WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT AT THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE 64TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 22, 2009



Mr. Chairman,

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports on the agenda item under consideration today, including his oral report on the progress in the implementation of efforts related to the theme of the Second UN Decade to eradicate poverty.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by the Chair of the Group of 77.

Mr. Chairman,

Our shared objective of eradicating poverty has become even more relevant and urgent in the context of the ongoing financial and economic crisis. Coupled with the impacts of the food and energy crises of last year, the economic crisis has pushed millions back into poverty and threatens to reverse years of development gains.

Against this background, it is imperative that poverty eradication continue to receive the highest attention of the UN and the international community. The First UN Decade to eradicate poverty from 1997-2006 played an important role in anchoring poverty eradication at the core of the UN development agenda, and led to concerted international efforts. We look forward to enhancing this momentum in the implementation of the Second UN Decade till 2017 on the important theme of employment.

The UN must be proactive in creating an international environment that assists developing countries in implementing their national development strategies. The issue of enhanced financial and technical assistance by the international community is a key element in this. In addition, improved market access, debt relief and transfer of technology also play a key role in creating an international environment conducive for development. Access to critical technologies at affordable rates is an area in particular where the UN needs to play an important facilitative role. International governance structures must also be reformed, with greater voice and participation of developing countries.

Permit me to also emphasize that there is no "one-size-fits-all" answer to the complex problems of poverty eradication. It is, therefore, essential that each country must have the policy space to formulate and implement its own development strategy, based on its unique challenges and conditions. In the current economic environment, developing countries must be assisted to implement counter-cyclical measures for social sector investment and economic revival. Greater flexibilities are also required in international regimes to ensure primacy of the development dimension.

In essence, the global partnership for development that we have all committed to must be fully implemented. We also look forward to the Development Cooperation Forum of the UN Economic and Social Council playing a central role in international development cooperation efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

The important role women can play as key agents in the development process cannot be overemphasized. The 2009 "World Survey on the Role of Women in Development" provides a useful and detailed insight in this regard. Gender equality and empowerment of women are vital, particularly because of the multiplier effect on socio-economic growth. Our policy approaches must encourage active involvement of women

in planning and decision making, women's education, improved access of women to productive resources and opportunities as well as greater investment in women's health and nutrition. Progressive legal provisions, efforts to reduce the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality, gender mainstreaming and gender disaggregated information are crucial tools in these efforts. The international community must provide greater financial and technical resources to assist developing countries implement gender sensitive national development strategies.

I am happy to share that India has been actively promoting women's empowerment. Over one million Indian women at the grassroots level were brought into political decision making following the reservation thirteen years ago of one-third of all urban and local self-government posts in India for women. A similar reservation of seats for women in the Indian Parliament remains under consideration. India's Joint Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women independently monitors equality and empowerment of women and ensures that Indian legislation is gender responsive. We have institutionalised gender-sensitive budgeting and are making efforts to mainstream gender in policies and programmes of various Government departments.

The Government actively encourages and supports initiatives in formation of women's self-help groups. Today, there are more than 2 million women self-help groups in the country supporting more than 10 million rural families. We are happy that the "World Survey" has noted the important role being played by many self-help groups in India. We are also encouraging women entrepreneurs through special assistance schemes.

We have a statutory body – the National Commission for Women, which I have the privilege of chairing, - for the protection, welfare and development of women. We are strongly committed to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and that "women's rights are human rights". These rights should be enhanced to freedom to choose one's vocation; reduction in deprivation; reduction in discrimination; and reduction in exploitation.

Overall, India's planning focus has shifted towards recognizing women as fundamental agents of sustained socio-economic growth and development.

Thank you.

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