

STATEMENT BY Ms. ANNU TANDON, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT,
AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION ON AGENDA ITEM NO: 24
ERADICATION OF POVERTY: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS
DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY (2008-2017) AT THE
SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE 67TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ON NOVEMBER 05, 2012

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving me the floor. India aligns itself with the statement delivered by Algeria on behalf of the G-77.

The subject matter of the debate today - Poverty eradication and other development issues - is critical to the attainment of our cherished Millennium Development Goals.

We may take satisfaction in the number of global poor living on US\$ 1.25 a day to have come down from 1.8 billion in 1990 to 1.4 billion in 2005 but we still have more than a billion people living in extreme poverty and hunger. With just three years away from the MDG finish line the task at hand remains a daunting one.

At the RIO+20 Summit, we renewed our commitment to sustainable development. In doing so, we recognised poverty eradication to be the greatest global challenge. As we now move forward in framing the Sustainable Development Goals and the Post 2015 development agenda, tackling this development imperative should be our priority.

Without fighting poverty we can hardly make progress on our commitment to address global inequality or to combine sustainable development with equity.

Mr. Chairman,

The ongoing impacts of the global economic and financial crisis, and the faltering recovery, pose persistent impediments to combating poverty. High and volatile food and energy prices continue to erode the policy space developing countries have to advance their development goals.

Ensuring economic growth is, therefore, fundamental to eradicating poverty. Sustained economic growth in developing countries has been the principal instrument of poverty alleviation. In India, we have been singularly successful on this, notwithstanding the turbulence of the 2008 crisis and its aftermath. As per estimate, India would have taken out 188 million people out of the poverty net by 2015 compared to the 1990 level. But we would still be home to the largest number of global poor numbering more than 300 million.

My Parliamentary seat Unnao, situated in India's most populous state UTTAR PRADESH, is India's largest constituency. Unnao is an underdeveloped rural district where poverty remains the greatest development challenge. I, therefore, have a deep understanding of poverty and related issues.

We do, however, recognise that growth in itself is not sufficient to distribute opportunities and resources and have, therefore, adopted policies to ensure inclusive growth. This is the overarching objective of our Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) and without doubt would continue to be so for the future plans as well.

Mr. Chairman,

Recognising that poverty is multi-dimensional in nature, our Government has launched large scale socio-economic programmes and interventions to reduce poverty, fight malnutrition and hunger, reduce infant mortality and promote health and gender empowerment.

With a view to tackle poverty, enhance our food security and upgrade rural infrastructure, India has launched the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme, the largest cash for work programme in the world. The programme guarantees 100 days of work annually to those willing. This pro-job strategy is of particular relevance at a time when the world is confronted with job-less growth.

We are committed to combining growth with equity. Our National Rural Health Mission, School Lunch Programme to fight malnutrition, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan for universal education and Swabhimaan programme for financial inclusion are all designed to meet this objective.

We have also kept women at the centre of all our development policies and programmes. We have been particularly successful in promoting participation of women in our local governance and have reserved 50% seats for women in our local bodies.

Mr. Chairman,

Strategies for poverty reduction in developing countries must have a key focus on rural development as majority of the people are dependent on agriculture and allied activities for livelihood. We need to enhance investment in irrigation, roads, cold storage and energy access to bolster rural productivity.

Countries must also adopt policies to spur job enhancing growth, undertake social protection measures to assist the poor and induce larger domestic mobilisation of resources through financial inclusion, micro-credit and other policies to boost small enterprise.

Fundamental to job-creation, especially in developing countries, is to pursue skill development and training. In India, we have launched the National Skill Development Mission, a public-partnership initiative to build and upgrade employable skills with focus on the informal sector. The World Bank in 2008 initiated the Rural Migrant Skills Development and Employment Project to support transition of rural workers to urban areas. Such innovative programmes could be productive templates to follow.

Mr. Chairman,

Developing countries, constricted by the global economic slowdown, of which they have become the principal victims, need enhanced resources and policy space to pursue their development aspirations. The 0.7% ODA commitment of developed countries, with some honourable exceptions, still remain unmet.

We remain deeply concerned that ODA in 2011 declined by almost 3% to US Dollars 133.5 billion, first such fall in global ODA since 1997 and to the Least Developed Countries by 9%.

Developing countries, in particular the Least Developed Countries, the Landlocked Developing Countries, the Small Island Developing States and countries in Africa are in urgent need of an enabling international environment that is conducive for meeting their foremost challenge- poverty eradication. In this context, it is imperative that we move forward on the Doha Development Round, on Climate Change Negotiations to seek an ambitious and comprehensive outcome and on a comprehensive reform of the Bretton Woods Institutions for equitable participation of developing countries.

South-South Cooperation in recent years has complemented global resources targeted at the development agenda, but it cannot be a substitute for North-South Cooperation. It must be allowed to grow within its own space and in accordance with its own principles.

India has been privileged to share its development experience with fellow developing countries. We remain committed to doing more in the coming years with our partners in the South and stepping up our support to South-South Cooperation.

Let our actions to fight poverty be worthy of our commitment.

I thank you.

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