

Agenda Item 64(a, b): Right of Children

14 October 2016

INDIA STATEMENT Counsellor Mayank Joshi, at the Third Committee of the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Madam Chair,

The Convention on the Rights of Child is the most widely accepted international treaty. It symbolizes the commitment of the international community to act in the best interests of the children, the future of humanity.

Addressing the concerns of children is an imperative for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We thank the UNSG for his report and also other reports under the Agenda item. We note with concern that though commendable progress has been made improving lives of millions of children, growing inequalities continue, depriving the poorest and most excluded children of their rights. We are also concerned at the declining assistance to the poorest countries, down to 8 percent relative to 2013.

Madam Chair,

Despite progress on several indicators on situation of children worldwide, over 47% of the world's 2 billion children continue to suffer from poverty and millions are vulnerable to existing and emerging challenges including armed conflict, climate change, epidemics and natural disasters.

Without addressing the miserable condition of one-half of the world's children, very little can be achieved. Political will, resource mobilization and investment is needed for addressing concerns of child in the areas of poverty eradication, health, education and protection. Safe, healthy and well-educated children are an imperative in sustainable development.

Madam Chair,

With over 450 million children, India is home to the largest child population in the world. The Indian constitution has several provisions providing for protection, development and welfare of children. India recognizes every child as unique and "supremely important asset".

India has adopted a rights-based approach in its National Policy for Children in 2013. The National Charter for Children of 2003 underlines the intent to secure for every child its inherent right to be a child and enjoy a healthy, happy and safe childhood. In addition, India is committed to concerted action against the consequences of poverty on children.

Our policies and programmes address issues of literacy and education, healthcare, development and institutional framework with a view for development and well-being of children. Civil Society is an active participant in these endeavors.

Elementary education is a fundamental right in India. We recognize that literacy, particularly from early childhood, is the key to the implementation of an inter-generational approach towards rights of child. India has achieved full gender parity and almost full enrollment in primary education.

The flagship universal programme, Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) covers health care services and nutrition, immunization and pre-school non-formal education to over 37 million children in the age group of 3-6 years.

In the health sector, our sustained efforts have resulted in making India polio free, and more recently, overcoming 'maternal neonatal tetanus'.

Ending exploitation and violence against children is fundamental to ensuring a healthy future for every child. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights was set up in 2007. The eradication of child labour is a priority for the Government of India. We are strictly enforcing the ban on the employment of children.

The Integrated Child Protection Scheme in 2009 provides for the improvement in the well-being of children in difficult circumstances including destitute children. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act came into force in November, 2012. There is also a comprehensive legislative and policy framework to address the problem of trafficking of women and children.

The girl child is one of the most vulnerable members of any society. A number of programmes are being implemented to address the declining child sex ratio and for empowerment of women on a life cycle continuum, including through the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's **Beti Bacho Beti Pado**-save **daughters educate daughters**- programme. The government has also undertaken legislative and policy measures to ban sex selective abortion and child marriage.

ICT tools are being used effectively in the implementation of child-oriented policies and programme. India's first 24/7 free and emergency outreach service of 'Childline' for children in need of care & protection is being expanded countrywide. Online Track-Child service enables data on missing children and their ultimate repatriation and rehabilitation. With increasing use of internet in society, our internet industry actors are committed to take vigorous action to help eliminate online child sexual exploitation and grooming.

Madam Chair,

We must strengthen our resolve and strategic partnerships among Member States, the UN system and civil society to ensure that children live in peace and security and with full dignity and without

want. We look forward to a comprehensive review of actions taken and challenges faced at the fifteenth anniversary of "A World Fit for Children" next year.

I Thank You.