

*Agenda Item 42: Special Session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit on Children*

*Statement by Dr. Atul Khare, Counsellor, on November 15, 2000*

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Mr. President,

At the outset, we would like to commend the distinguished Permanent Representative of Jamaica and the members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, for their tireless efforts in ensuring the success of the forthcoming Special Session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit on Children. We would also like to thank the Secretary General for his report A/55/429 which clearly brings out the need for mobilisation of additional resources to break the cycle of poverty in one generation.

India's achievement of the World Summit Goals has been positive, if not total. Certain areas which call for mission oriented goals e.g. immunization or water supply depend on resources and provision of services, whereas other goals are more complex and require attitudinal changes of processes at the community level and convergence from several sectors and civil society partners. Democratic and open processes of decision-making and implementation require time for consensus building and for motivation of people. Understandably, such processes take a longer time and are more difficult to achieve. Though of course, the gains obtained in a democratic set up with participation of all, are certainly more permanent and easier to sustain. Under these circumstances, India has made appreciable progress in goals like immunisation and literacy, whereas there has been less progress in areas such as sanitation, and combating malnutrition. The commitment and continued perseverance of Government is firm and we are confident that we are progressing on the right track, recognising the need for decentralization and convergence as two important planks for achieving these goals. State Programmes of Action on Children (SPAC) in all major states have been prepared after the National Plan of Action (NPA) was finalized in 1992. The process of preparation of SPAC, adopting the rights-based approach, has allowed sub-national planning and ownership and mobilization of resources at the local levels. We are already implementing the National Plan of Action for the Girl Child prepared in the context of the SAARC decade of the Girl Child (1991-2000), under which specific goals for girl children are given special attention. India has undertaken, with cooperation of UNICEF, 53 MICS II surveys at state and union territory levels to obtain information on more than 80 indicators relevant to the condition of women and children. The National Family Health Survey II and the second generation of the multi-indicator cluster surveys, together with a number of existing and ongoing data collection systems, will provide reliable information to report on, at both national and sub-national levels, on the World Summit Goals, and for preparing future actions that are based on better evidence.

We have participated actively and constructively with other delegations in both sessions of the Preparatory Committee in February and May this year and have carefully read its reports contained in A/55/43 (Parts I & II). During this process, we have carefully listened to the statements of other delegations and have learnt from their experiences. Our views on the key issues and trends that should be the focus of our attention, as we approach

the Special Session, are well known. We would, therefore, very briefly refer to only some of them.

We believe that the outcome of the Special Session should be a focussed inter-governmentally negotiated document, which must be concise, short and action-oriented. Some of the key ingredients that we would wish to see in this document are:

First, steps to implement the unfinished agenda of the World Summit on Children, including the crucial questions related to the mobilization of resources.

Second, agreement on efforts that are required to be taken at all levels for the eradication of poverty. Central feature of our future actions in the twenty first century should be to break the vicious cycle of poverty that creates and recreates undernourished infants, poorly educated young children, marginalized adolescents, and unsafe and premature motherhood, all of which fundamentally undermine the fulfilment of their rights.

Third, a strategy to combat malnutrition intergenerationally in children and infants, in adolescents, and in pregnant and lactating mothers.

Fourth, a reiteration of the importance of literacy and education, including the promotion of the values of compassion, tolerance, and caring, values which have been resoundingly endorsed by our Heads of State and Government in the Millennium Declaration.

Fifth, a focus on improving the quality of water supply and provision of better sanitation facilities.

Sixth, a focus on the special needs of adolescents who, with their increasing numbers, represent a particularly important challenge.

Seventh, children in exceptional circumstances, including those affected by terrorism and armed conflict, street children, juvenile and delinquent children, child labour and children affected by HIV/AIDS.

In all of the above areas, special attention should be accorded to the girl-child, whose growth and development are of paramount importance for the well being of the children of the next generation. Only this approach can possibly secure appreciable gains within a single generation.

The involvement of the community, not only in structuring the future programmes, but also in their implementation and monitoring, is also of great importance.

Mr. President,

In the belief that the Special Session would contribute to the creation of a future of hope and fulfilment for all the world's children, we have co-sponsored the resolution and look forward to receiving the draft of the proposed outcome from the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, as early as possible, to ensure its early finalisation.