

Agenda Item 97: Training and Research: United Nations University

Statement by Hon'ble Mr. Rattan Lal Kataria, MP on October 31, 2000

Mr. Chairman,

As the United Nations University (UNU) completes 25 years of its existence, its role as a bridge between the United Nations and the international academic community in a rapidly evolving and globalizing environment remains as relevant today as when it was founded. When established United Nations University was given the challenging task to be a think tank for the United Nations, interacting with scholars, academicians, researchers to develop inputs for the United Nations on global issues. As we shift to a knowledge-based global world, the results of research being done in the academic and technical institutions are in our times, even more important inputs into the deliberations of United Nations intergovernmental organs. The UNU can contribute significantly in this area through the creation of knowledge networks.

The Government of India has attached consistent importance to the research and capacity building work of the UN University. India has contributed generously to the UNU Endowment Fund and the UNU's World Institute for Development Economics Research in Helsinki, Finland. Eminent and widely respected Indian scholars as well as former senior governmental officials have served on the governing council of the University or on the governing boards of its Research and Training Centers. Numerous Indian institutions and scientists have participated and/or are participating in the substantive activities of the University. We are glad to note that amongst the partners of UNU are the Indian Institutes of Technology, the premier institutions in the field of engineering, computers and biotechnology in the country, whose highly trained and qualified professionals have contributed significantly to the progress of India and to that of the world.

The availability of rigorous, reliable and impartial academic inputs to the development of multilateral policies for cooperation constitute a major and indispensable input into the deliberations of United Nations intergovernmental organs. We appreciate the fact that the University has in the past few years strengthened its contributions to United Nations deliberations and, in particular, to the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee of the General Assembly. The panel organized by the UNU last May on information technology and economic growth and development was especially illuminating.

We have noted the observations that the Rector of the University made in his introductory statement on the Strategic Plan which was endorsed by the Council of the University last December. In this connection, we welcome the intent of the University to undertake research and capacity building within two main programme areas - peace and governance and environment and sustainable development. It is however, important that while undertaking its research studies and organizing workshops, United Nations University bears in mind the mandate of the inter-Governmental processes and the priorities of developing countries.

In the field of development, there is no dearth of possible areas of research. One major topic of relevance to member states is the application of science for development. In this respect, the University should endeavor to make the work emanating from its Research and Training Centres concerned with science and technology and information technology more widely known and accessible to Member States. More generally, the University should place greater emphasis on the dissemination of its research findings at the UN main duty stations.

My government attaches great importance to strengthening capacity building through training. The University has indeed a distinguished record in this area. In our view, these activities should be further broadened as envisaged by the Strategic Plan of the University. Greater reliance should be placed on the utilization of national expertise and the focus of the programmes should be more demand driven in order to fully meet developing country needs and requirements.