

Statement by Mr. M. Krishnasswamy, Member of Parliament and Member of the Indian delegation on Agenda Item 65 – ‘Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children’ at the Third Committee of the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly on October 17, 2013

**Mr. Chairman,**

At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representatives for their reports under this agenda item.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Indian Constitution has several provisions providing for protection, development and welfare of children.



A National Charter for children was adopted in 2004. A detailed Plan of Action was drawn up in 2005 focusing on four broad areas: child survival, child development, child protection and child participation.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Early childhood is the most crucial phase. This is when the foundations for physical, psychological, social and intellectual development are laid. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), the flagship programme of the Government benefits 78 million children below the age of 6 in the area of nutrition, health and education.

ICDS also covers these children with immunization, regular health check-ups and referral services as required as well as provides pre-school non-formal education to 37 million children in the age group of 3-6 years. The Scheme is being universalised.

ICDS and other programmes such as Universal Immunisation Programme, Integrated Management of Neonatal Childhood Illnesses, Total Sanitation Campaign, and the Reproductive and Child Health Programme have led to significant decline in infant mortality rates.

I am also happy to state here that India manufactures 40% of vaccines used in universal immunization programs across the world, protecting small babies and little children from disease and death.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Indian Constitution provides for free and compulsory education for children up to the age of 14 years. The enactment of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act in 2009 provided a momentum to our efforts to address issues of equity and elimination of barriers in accessing education.

With nearly universal enrollment for primary education, our current focus is on the expansion of secondary education and its accessibility to girls, and skill development for improved employability.

As part of a public-private partnership, private schools reserve 25% of seats for children from economically weaker sections of society with budgetary support from the government.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The girl child is one of the most vulnerable members of any society. Targeted interventions for the girl child have led to almost full enrolment in primary grades of schooling and narrowing of gender gaps in middle and higher education. The government has also undertaken legislative and policy measures to ban sex selective abortion and child marriage.

India observes January 24 as “National Girl Child Day”. The occasion is used to generate awareness about their tremendous potential as well as to highlight the challenges faced by them.

**Mr. Chairman,**

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 under 14 years of age.

To strengthen implementation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, the government launched the Integrated Child Protection Scheme in 2009 to cover offences against children which are not presently addressed in the law, and to increase the safety net for the protection of 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.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The child is an instrumental stakeholder in the social contract. We have an obligation to provide a safe and enabling environment for their development. I would also like to point out that civil society in India is an integral and active partner in this endeavor.

Let me reaffirm our commitment to national and international efforts on the promotion and protection of the rights of our children.

**I thank you.**

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