

Statement by Prof. P. J. Kurien, Hon'ble Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha at the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament being organised on the theme 'Placing Democracy at the Service of Peace and Sustainable Development, Building the World the People Want' in the United Nations Headquarters, New York on 2nd September 2015.



Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Delegates:

1. I deem it a privilege to participate in the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. This Conference precedes the UN Summit of September, 2015 which will launch the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to replace the Millennium Development Goals with a view to ushering in a comprehensive social, economic and environmental revolution by 2030.
2. Pursuit of SDGs will require strong political commitment on the part of all stakeholders, especially the Parliament and the Government, and adoption of country specific approaches.
3. Eradication of poverty, hunger and malnutrition is indispensable for peace and sustainable development. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister of India while addressing first ever UN Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 had put a searching question "Are not poverty and need the greatest polluters?" That interrogating remark and her insightful speech Centering around poverty as the main source of pollution became the folklore of environmental movement. The SDGs can be pursued only by giving primacy to the concerns of the poor and the underprivileged sections of the humanity. This requires adoption of common but differentiated responsibilities and the commitment of developed countries to mandatorily contribute 0.7% of their Gross National Income as the Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the developing countries so that these countries can effectively pursue SDGs.
4. Draft declaration of this Conference refers to climate change. In the Upper House of Indian Parliament, the issue of environmental degradation and climate change was raised in 1952 itself when our Parliament started functioning. Since then, our Parliament has enacted many legislations which protect environment and promote development.

5. Greater representation of women in all spheres of life including legislature is essential for sustainable development. In India because of reservation of seats for women in grassroot representative bodies almost a million women have been elected to such bodies. Agenda 21 of the Rio Summit, among other factors, stressed on gender equality for achieving sustainable development. Mahatma Gandhi considered improvement of status of women as an essential component in his non-violent mass action plan.

6. Establishment of accountable and inclusive institutions globally will serve the cause of Sustainable Development Goals. In pursuance of this objective, India reiterates its stand for reform of UN Security Council and other Bretton Woods institutions for making them more democratic and representative of the global order of 21st century.

7. The Sustainable Development Goals serve the cause of humanity and the planet earth. I am sure that the deliberations in the Conference would be constructive and productive to achieve SDGs by the year 2030. It requires extraordinary courage, conviction and purposeful action.

8. With these words, I have great pleasure in extending greetings to the organisers and participants for the success of the Conference.