

Statement by Hon'ble H.E. Mrs. Preneet Kaur, Minister of State for External Affairs, on Agenda Item 114: Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit [Adoption of Resolution A./64/L.56 on System Wide Coherence] at the United Nations General Assembly on July 02, 2010

**Mr. President,**

It is my privilege to address the General Assembly as we adopt today the landmark decision to create UN WOMEN, a composite entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women within the United Nations.

My congratulations to you, Mr. President, for your leadership on this transformational reform at the UN.

I say this with particular pride as India has the distinction of giving the General Assembly its first woman President, Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. I am naturally happy that my delegation under the leadership of Hardeep Singh Puri played a very active role in the success of the negotiations.

My congratulations also to the Co-Facilitators, the Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary-General and all others involved in the process



**Mr. President,**

India is home to more than half a billion women. Our Constitution enshrines gender equality and affirmative action to ensure women's empowerment and this has been a key focus of our socio-economic policies.

Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh has said, and I QUOTE *"No society can claim to be a part of the modern civilized world unless it treats its women on par with men."* UNQUOTE

India has also taken major strides in the area of political empowerment of women. Today, more than a million women elected representatives participate in political decision-making at the grassroots level. A move to provide similar reservation of seats for women in the Indian Parliament is in advanced stage of the legislative process, already having received the approval of the Upper House of our Parliament.

**Mr. President,**

India welcomes the creation of the UN WOMEN as a significant victory for the cause of women worldwide. It is a reflection of our collective commitment to the pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Our decision here today also takes a step towards restoring the faith of those Member-States, including mine, who often regard the UN as an anachronistic body resistant to organizational reform and innovation. We, of course, hope that it creates a momentum for much-needed reform in other areas as well.

I would like to take this opportunity to pledge India's full support to UN WOMEN. We urge early operationalisation of the entity so that the international community can work with renewed vigour and commitment for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

In conclusion, I would like to recall the words of Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance and the leader of my party, and I QUOTE

*"Complete gender equality, nothing less, must be our over-riding goal. There must be neither compromise nor complacency. The struggle is joined. It must be brought to full fruition."*UNQUOTE

I thank you, Mr President.

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