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“Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies”

INDIA STATEMENT
By
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Madam Chair,

On behalf of my delegation, I take this opportunity to felicitate you and other Bureau members on your election.

My delegation associates with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77.

Madam Chair,

Social protection has emerged as the key instrument to addressing inequalities, though challenges in terms of coverage and fiscal sustainability remain.

Focus on developing more efficient tax collection systems, formalizing the informal economy and targeting public services and financial intervention to the legitimate beneficiaries, all achievable through appropriate technology intervention, are some of the measures that can assist developing countries with the means to reducing income inequality, enhancing economic productivity and improving the livelihood of the poor and vulnerable.

Measures to address wage discriminations, protection of worker's rights, extending social protection as well as creation of decent employment and entrepreneurial opportunities particularly for women and youth are important for building more resilient societies.

Madam Chair,

One sixth of global population resides in India. The significance of India's success in lifting people out of poverty and addressing inequality is not only well recognized, but is also replicable.

India has taken several innovative measures by prioritizing inclusive growth. This is also reflected in the motto of my government which calls for – ‘Collective efforts for inclusive development’.

Financial inclusion and generation of decent employment opportunities with special focus on women, youth, senior citizens and persons with disabilities is at the heart of our development strategy.

Empowerment through digitization has been the driving force behind our transformative initiatives. India’s biometric-based unique identification system - ‘Aadhaar’, now covers over 90% of the country’s population, enhancing access to vital social services.

340 million people, who previously did not qualify to open bank accounts and access financial services, today have bank accounts opened through the government’s Financial Inclusion Initiative.

With the aim of ensuring accurate targeting of subsidies to beneficiaries and to reduce fraud, the government launched the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme. By leveraging Bank Accounts, the Unique Identification Number and mobile telephony, the Indian government has disbursed more than USD 90 billion through Direct Benefit Transfers to more than 330 million beneficiaries. This has enhanced efficiency of social security schemes and reduced pilferage to zero.

As a step towards Universal Health Coverage, in September 2018, we launched the world’s largest healthcare programme titled, “National Health Protection Scheme”, to provide medical treatment to nearly 500 million people. Six months since the launch, close to 1 million patients have benefited from free treatment made available under the scheme which otherwise would have cost them \$450 million. Poor and middle class families are also benefiting from reduction in the prices of essential medicines, cardiac stents and knee implants, and availability of medicines at affordable prices.

For securing the health of home-makers in rural areas we have embarked upon a programme to deliver 80 million free gas cylinder connections. More than 60 million gas connections have already been provided.

Small and micro-enterprises, which impact the lives of close to 500 million, is the economic foundation of India. To assist these micro-enterprises to gain access to institutional finance, the government launched the Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency (MUDRA), which extends affordable and collateral-free loans up to \$14,000 to start their own businesses. To date, loans to the tune of over \$110 billion

have been extended to over 157 million micro-enterprises; 75% of the beneficiaries are women-owned and operated enterprises.

Madam Chair,

India now has the third-longest fully paid maternity leave in the world. Women in India are eligible for 26 weeks of paid leave to care for their newborn.

In 2015, the government launched life and disability insurance for those who never had access to insurance earlier. We are also in the process of launching the world's largest pension program for workers in the un-organized sector.

The Accessible India Campaign which promotes barrier-free access in public spaces and in virtual ecosystems, promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.

We have also initiated the world's largest behavioural change movement through the Clean India Mission. Over the last five years India has achieved 98% rural sanitation coverage.

Madam Chair,

India is a 'young' nation, with half of the population under 25 years of age and two thirds under 35 years. Our focus is on harnessing this demographic dividend by creating opportunities through skill and entrepreneurship development and by using digital technologies to improve access to information and knowledge. Through the government's Skill Certification Scheme, over 10 million youth are being trained to help them start up their own enterprises and become job creators than be job seekers.

Madam Chair,

As India endeavors to build a more prosperous and inclusive society continue, we are stepping up our development partnership efforts with fellow developing countries.

At the multilateral level, India has established the India-UN Development Partnership Fund in its efforts to foster South-South cooperation.

India, Brazil and South Africa with the active partnership with UNDP also assist developing countries through the IBSA Trust Fund.

India has also made voluntary contribution to UN Tax Trust Fund for two consecutive years to help developing countries actively participate in the discussion of tax issues.

Madam Chair,

We remain committed to engage with the Member States and the UN system in the spirit of partnership to address the challenges to social inclusion in a coordinated and comprehensive manner.

I thank you.
