

# **74<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

## **Agenda Item: 126 Global Health & Foreign Policy**

### **INDIA STATEMENT By Ambassador K. Nagaraj Naidu Deputy Permanent Representative**

11 December 2019

Mr. President,

Our people are our greatest asset. There is no investment more beneficial than investment in good health of people.

Investment in health is investment in poverty alleviation, in generating jobs, in enhancing productivity, and in ensuring inclusive economic growth, and healthier, safer, and fairer societies.

We appreciate the contribution of the Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative in mobilizing political support for major public health issues and thereby ensuring that they are placed high on the international agenda.

We thank France for putting put forward a resolution this year on behalf of the seven member countries, on promoting an inclusive approach to strengthening health systems.

This topic is of particular relevance in the context of implementation of the High Level Political Declaration on Universal Health Coverage adopted in September this year.

Mr. President,

Strengthening the health system can be accomplished through comprehensive changes to policies and regulations and relationships across building blocks in the health system that allow more effective use of resources and motivate positive changes in behaviour of service providers and users.

We would like to highlight following points in this context:

- Affordability is the key to equitable access to healthcare. Stronger health systems must guarantee both access and choice. The full use of TRIPS flexibilities including the development and use of generics and local manufacturing capacities to meet public health objectives, transparency in cost and price of medicines and other technologies, innovative partnerships in R&D and the full use of new and emerging technologies including digital technologies and appropriate use of traditional medicines are critical in this context.
- Both public and private sector have a role to play in building stronger health systems. However, we need to be cautious about commercialization of health services. A strong public health system is needed to act as a guarantor. Governments also need to provide strategic leadership and synergies across health systems, provide clear incentives for different private actors to participate and to provide regulatory framework to ensure quality and accessibility.
- Advancing competencies of the health workforce and improving distribution and diversities are important. We need to address shortages by aligning training, recruitment, distribution, and retention of the health workforce to serve in the areas where the need is greatest. Community health workers play a crucial role in covering the last mile in delivery of services. We need to strengthen their capacity.
- Clinical research and innovation is of utmost importance for healthcare systems strengthening. Operational research often gets low priority. This needs to be corrected to help identify the systemic challenges and their solutions. This is particularly relevant as we experience rapid global spread of digital health technologies. We need to assess their design and delivery and ensure that these applications bring desired health outcomes.

Mr. President,

The healthcare reform in India is taking place at an unprecedented scale and scope. Our holistic approach to healthcare with public-private partnership provides a unique model for the developing world.

India has launched the National Health Protection Scheme in September 2018. The scheme is based on twin pillars – expanding access to primary healthcare service through Health and Wellness Centres and providing insurance coverage for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization to poor and vulnerable families.

The Health and Wellness Centres would deliver comprehensive primary health care bringing healthcare closer to the communities. We plan to set up 150,000 such Health & Wellness Centres by 2022.

Over 19,000 hospitals have been empanelled in the programme. More than half of these are in private sector. A total of 115 million health cards have been issued and 6.9 million people have availed treatments under the scheme.

The other arm of the National Health Protection Scheme is providing health insurance cover for up to US\$7,000 per family, per year, for secondary and tertiary hospitalization. This insurance is provided to about 100 million households or about 500 million people who are poor and most vulnerable. The insurance scheme provides cashless and paperless access to health services for every beneficiary at designated hospitals across the country.

A robust IT system has been created for connecting the service providers, beneficiaries and the administrators at federal and state levels. A 24x7 toll free telephone line has been started to answer a range queries regarding the programme.

With over a one million community health workers and mid-wives, we have a formidable force of women frontline health workers. They are the strength of our programme. 75 new medical colleges are being set up to add more than fifteen thousand new seats for medical education.

Other supporting initiatives such as providing “Clean Cooking Gas” to underprivileged families has improved the health of millions of women and children. The “Fit India” and “Eat Right” movements are also important elements of our strategy for health promotion and disease prevention. The “National Nutritional Mission” is geared to improve nutritional status of children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers. The aim of the Mission is to make India malnutrition free by 2022.

India is developing drugs and therapeutics as well as practices and policies that provide solutions to local and global health system challenges.

We saw the transformative potential of affordability when Indian pharmaceutical companies supplied medicines to HIV/AIDS patients in Africa for less than a dollar a day in early years of this millennium. Today, a large proportion of the antiretroviral drugs used globally to combat HIV/AIDS are supplied by Indian pharmaceutical firms. India is not only the largest provider of generic drugs globally, but also caters to over 60% of global demand for various vaccines. We have been also partnering with African countries by developing telemedicine facilities.

Mr. President,

In India it is the general belief that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the mind, body, and spirit. The world has come to recognize the value of this holistic approach. We are not just fighting diseases, we are promoting good health. If the issue of inclusivity is at the core of this agenda then it cannot be achieved by ignoring traditional and holistic medical systems.

Mr. President,

We stand committed to work with everyone based on our own experience to address the national and global healthcare challenges.

I thank you.