



**INDIA**  
**भारत**

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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**AND**

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**on**

**AGENDA ITEM 28: [a] ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN  
[b] IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE 4<sup>TH</sup> WORLD CONFERENCE ON  
WOMEN AND OF THE 23<sup>RD</sup> SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**THIRD COMMITTEE  
65<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**NEW YORK**

**October 13, 2010**

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, please allow me to thank the Secretary General for all his reports under this agenda item. We would also like to thank all the speakers who made presentations on this agenda item. Our delegation would like to broadly associate ourselves with the statement made by the Chair of the G77.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women remains the key focus area of social development and distributive justice globally. Socio-economic development will be incomplete, if women are ignored. In fact, gender equality and the empowerment of women is an integral part of the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

Soon after gaining independence, the founding fathers of India ensured that in the Constitution of India, the principles of gender equality and the empowerment of women were codified and enshrined, which not only guarantees equality to women, but also advocates affirmative action for women, wherever necessary. These have been further reinforced through periodic amendments in legislation and policy. Following successive policies and programmes, in 2001, we formulated the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women with the main objectives of empowering women socially, economically and politically; ensuring equal access to health care, education and employment; strengthening legal systems to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women; and building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations. The ongoing Eleventh Five Year development plan of India (2007-12) has recognized women as agents of sustained socio-economic growth and change. Gender has been made a cross-cutting theme in all the development plans. The purpose of this holistic approach was to reduce gender disparities across regions and communities and ensure access to basic physical infrastructure as well as health and education services to all. While a large number of programmes and schemes are being implemented to mainstream gender in all activities throughout the Government of India under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh, I would like to highlight a few.

In the field of education, the Education for All Campaign (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan) has made tremendous impact on girls. There has also been a special focus on girls' education, aiming to target the 'hardest to reach' girls through residential schools, mid day meals and other incentives. In order to address adult illiteracy in women, the National Literacy Mission has been recast as the Female Literacy Mission and aims to target 70 million adults in the next 5 years, out of which 60 million will be women.

Significant progress has been made in the field of economic and social empowerment. One of our flagship schemes in this regards has been the 'Swayamsidha' scheme, which means 'self help'. This scheme seeks to empower women by creating economically sustainable Self Help Groups. With more than 2.2 million Self Help Groups across the country, covering 33 million households, this programme has been a silent revolution for women. In my our experience as a Member of Parliament from Alleppey District (which is popularly known as the Venice of the East), self help groups have created tremendous results by setting up small and medium scale industrial units, especially in handicraft and traditional industries like coir and handloom as well as agriculture, including horticulture. This had also helped in converting unutilized farm land into productive land.

Health is yet another important component for the empowerment of women. We have redoubled our efforts to reduce maternal mortality rates, which is an indicator of any society's health status. With the launch of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in 2005, more than US \$ 3.5 billion is being spent on health annually, in particular maternal and children's health programmes. Under this programme, all the villages are covered through village-based "Accredited Social Health Activists" (ASHA) who act as a link between the health centers and the villagers. Although these ASHAs are honorary volunteers, but they are paid performance-based compensation for undertaking specific health or other social sector

programmes with measurable outputs. Currently, India is focusing on strengthening its efforts in the 235 districts that account for nearly 70% of all infant and maternal deaths. With our concerted efforts, there has been a decline in the infant and maternal mortality rates with the IMR at 53 (2008) and MMR at 254 (2006). We are hopeful that as we approach the target date of Millennium Development Goals in 2015, we will be able to achieve the goals.

Mr. Chairman,

Political empowerment is the most important component in the overall empowerment of women. Our efforts in India have been to include women in decision making process at all levels, in particular at the grassroots level. Under the vision of former Prime Minister of India, late Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the Constitution of India was amended to give 33% reservation for women in rural and urban local bodies. Since 1993, currently, we have more than a million elected women representatives in local bodies. Building on these successes, under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh and the strong conviction and determination of Hon'ble Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, the Parliament was convinced last year to raise the percentage of women in local bodies to 50%. I am happy to inform you that in my State of Kerala, first elections after the enactment of this law will be held next week. In addition, the Upper House of Parliament has also passed a bill to reserve 33 % of seats in the Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies for women. This bill is being actively pursued in the Lower House of the Parliament.

This year, as we commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Security Council Resolution 1325 on 'women and peace and security', three important achievements related to advancement of women was made at the United Nations. We were able to successfully create UN Women, launch the Global Plan of Action against trafficking in person and launch the UN Secretary General's Global Strategy on Women's and Children's Health. In this regard, let me congratulate Ms. Michelle Bachelet on the assumption of the important post of heading the UN Women. We would like to extend her our full support and cooperation in her assignment. Under her able leadership, we hope the UN Women would be able to stand up to the expectations of Member States in providing necessary assistance, when requested, in a timely and adequate manner. In this regard, we also look forward to the early constitution of the new Executive Board of the UN Women and its early operationalisation.

Mr Chairman,

More than eighty years ago, Mahatma Gandhi said "there is no occasion for women to consider themselves subordinate or inferior to man....but unfortunately today she does not realize what tremendous advantage she has over man. Hence, it is onto us to take valuable measures so that the same can be avoided and women like men can have an equal experience in the society." This clarion call is, unfortunately, still valid all over the world today. While commendable progress has been made around the world, much needs to be done to ensure that the gap between policy and programmatic implementation are reduced. Let us recommit ourselves to accelerate our efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women with effective programmes and policies to make this a reality.

Let me assure you that India is fully committed to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. Gender equality and empowerment of women is one of India's foremost priorities.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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