



Ministerial Segment
78th Commission Session of the United Nations
ESCAP

Agenda Item:2(a)
*‘A common agenda to advance sustainable development in Asia
and the Pacific’*

Statement by
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Country Statement of India

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**Mr. Chair,
Madam Executive Secretary,
Excellencies Ministers,
Distinguished delegates**

1. I congratulate UNESCAP and the fellow member States on the occasion of 75th anniversary of the establishment of ESCAP. India has always espoused the principles of multilateralism and has actively supported the establishment of ESCAP as one of its founding members. India was the first country from South Asia to do so. The support to ESCAP has not only been through active participation in its events and contributing financially but also through hosting two of its offices – the Subregional Office for South and South West Asia and Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology. India takes pride in this journey of 75 years along side ESCAP and wishes to reaffirm its commitment to UNESCAP and its role in regional cooperation and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.

Mr. Chair,

2. As we all are aware, the **COVID-19** pandemic has imposed serious challenges before countries in their development journey across the world. I wish to congratulate the countries in the Asia Pacific region for their remarkable actions against the pandemic. To fight the pandemic in a collective and coordinated manner, India has launched multi-faceted efforts on domestic as well as global front. We are running a highly successful vaccination drive in the country which is nearing the 2 billion vaccine doses mark. On the global and regional front, guided by philosophy of 'वसुधैवकुटुंबकम्', India has assisted over 150 countries across the globe with essential medicines, medical equipment, vaccines and other medical supplies to strengthen their combat against the pandemic. The impact of this pandemic could be long-lasting and influence all spheres of our lives but we should not let this pandemic affect our resolve or reduce the pace of our developmental activities

including timely implementation and achievement of UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Also, I would like to underscore that ESCAP platform should be utilised for sharing of best practices and developmental experiences in the region.

3. For India, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent an agenda that necessitates achieving progress simultaneously across **social, economic, and environmental pillars**. The interconnectedness among these goals requires **coordinated planning, implementation and monitoring**. India also believes that developing countries need resource and technical support, open and fair markets for their goods, enhanced social resilience by strengthening the health and social protection systems and mobility for their trained human resource for achieving sustainable development.

4. Here the developed countries have an essential obligation to provide financial assistance to the developing countries, especially for global public good such as climate change mitigation and control of pandemics, so that they can fully achieve the SDGs. There is a need for a united voice to ensure that the developed countries honor their Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments especially in these unprecedented times.

Mr. Chair

5. In India, our domestic initiatives closely relate to several targets under the SDGs. **Through the Anti-poverty programmes** like the *National Rural Employment Guarantee*, the *National Rural Livelihood Mission*, and *Deendayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana*, India have been able to lift 275 million people from multidimensional poverty in the last decade.

6. Furthermore, the *Prime Minister's Garib Kalyan Yojna* launched in March, 2020 has supported the poor in each and every way during the testing times of Covid pandemic. The package includes insurance cover of USD 65,000 for health workers, subsidized food grains for 800 million people, direct beneficiary transfer for 200 million women, increase in wage rate under job guarantee programme which benefitted 136 million families, financial support to senior citizens, widows and people with disabilities and minimum income support to over 87 million farmers. This underlines the commitments of Indian Government for its citizens and more so for poor, downtrodden and disadvantaged to provide a sustainable environment for their growth. Most of our programmes have been

routed through direct benefit transfers through a nation-wide drive for financial inclusion by leveraging the new 400 million bank accounts opened under *Jan Dhan Yojana*. Direct benefit Transfer scheme was instrumental in delivering the benefits to all eligible beneficiaries ensuring transparency and good governance.

7. Focusing on women's health, we have expanded access to clean cooking fuel to poor women in over 80 million households through *PM Ujjwala Yojana*; built over 110 million toilets in rural areas to achieve universal sanitation in all our 600,000 (six hundred thousand) plus villages under *Swachh Bharat Mission*.

8. Progressing towards **Universal Health Coverage**, accessible, affordable, and quality health care has been institutionalized under *Ayushman Bharat*, which is the world's largest health protection scheme, providing an annual cover of about USD 6,667 to 100 million families (500 million individuals) from economically weaker sections. Further, India aims to set up at least one medical college in every district. In this endeavour 70 new medical colleges have started functioning in the last 3 years and 100 more medical colleges are about to be completed.

9. Country-wide initiatives have been taken to **improve gender equality** including specific ones to boost employability and economic participation of women. Flagship programmes like *Jan-dhan Yojana*, *Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana* and *STAND-UP Yojana* have revolutionized the lives of millions of Indian women by giving them financial independence and enabling them to access formal credit and other services of the banking system. India has sanctioned **USD 242 billion** in Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana, out of which **68%** amount have been sanctioned to Women Entrepreneurs.

10. India recognizes that 'Women-led development' holds the potential to create positive outcomes across multiple sectors and thus ensures multi-pronged holistic development. In alignment to this philosophy of women-led development, India is promoting Self Help Groups (SHGs) for the realization of socio-economic development of women through the programme Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) which aims to ensure that at least one-woman member from each rural poor household (about 90 million) is brought into the fold of women SHGs and their federations within a definite time frame.

Mr. Chair

11. The Covid-19 pandemic has also taught a lesson to the world that global economy needs greater diversification of global value chains, build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. It is with this objective, India has continued its programme of economic reforms which include fiscal consolidation, minimizing regulatory compliances, ease of doing business, accelerated infrastructure development, Goods and Services Tax reforms and direct tax reforms to increase domestic resource mobilization, while committing to keeping public debt at sustainable levels in the medium term. As a result of all these concerted efforts, India is emerging as one of the fastest growing market economies with expected GDP growth of 8.3% in 2022-23 and well poised to become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025.

12. I am happy to inform that despite COVID hardships in 2021-22, for the first-time merchandise exports from India crossed the USD 400 billion mark. During the same period, India also emerged as a 3rd largest Start-up ecosystem in the world with more than 70,000 recognized Startup's, with 100 unicorns valued at USD 332.7 billion, covering all sectors ranging from IT services, healthcare & life sciences, education, agriculture and professional & commercial services.

13. India has continuously demonstrated its responsibility towards acknowledging the emerging threats from climate change and implementing the climate actions on the basis of the principles of Equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities for improving efficiency of the economy and its engines of growth. Our commitment to become a net zero emissions nation by 2070, of building 50 percent renewable energy capacity by 2030 with 500 GW, our resolve for a 45 percent reduction in carbon intensity, and a cut down in carbon emissions by 1 billion tonnes by 2030 are prime examples of our strong action. Rather than relying on traditional policy instruments and strict regulations India believes in innovative solutions and scientific research for addressing environmental concerns. It is with this objective *National Hydrogen Mission* was launched to aid the government of India in meeting its climate target within the set time frame.

Mr. Chair

14. India joins the member states of UNESCAP in working collectively for a sustainable development process where No one is left behind. A multi-pronged approach

is needed, for which actions for economic diversification through empowering the SMEs sector, raising investments in human resources, particularly in the core social sectors of health and education, universalizing social protection, closing gender gaps and improving basic infrastructure, promoting rural development and environmental sustainability through clean energy infrastructure and promoting cross-border trade in renewal energy are important.

15. I take this opportunity to remind ourselves that our collective actions in next eight years will decide the future course of our coming generations. We need to work together for the greater cause of humanity, people, planet & environment to ensure a quality life for our people in a sustainable manner. Let wisdom prevail & humanity shine. Allow me to conclude with a popular shloka from Rigveda ...

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः
सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु
मा कश्चिद् दुःखभाग्भवेत्
ॐ शांतिः शांतिः शांतिः

May All be Prosperous and Happy
May All be free from Illness
May All see what is Auspicious
May No one Suffer in Anyway
May Peace Prevail in All Realms.

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen, I thank you for your time and attention.

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