



**INDIA**  
**भारत**

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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**On**

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the 24<sup>th</sup> Special Session  
of the General Assembly  
Priority theme: social integration  
[Agenda Item 3 (a)]**

**47<sup>th</sup> session Commission for Social Development**

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Madam Chair,

On behalf of the delegation of India, I would like to convey our warmest felicitations to you on your election. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support in guiding the deliberations of this Commission. I also congratulate other members of the Bureau. We associate ourselves with the statement made by Sudan as Chairman of the Group of 77.

Madam Chair,

The Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development of 1995 and the 24<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly recognised that economic development, social development and environment protection were interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development and a better quality of life. It also acknowledged that social development should be accorded high priority for the well being of humankind and for the creation of a 'society for all'. It identified that addressing socio-economic problems of poverty, employment, social integration and an inclusive decision making process was the main pillar of social development.

Madam Chair,

Social integration was considered an important commitment as it was necessary to foster a stable, safe and just society in order to not only promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms but also to develop non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity and participation of all in society. In the 13 years since the World Summit, modest progress has been achieved in social integration, with setting up of a Treaty Body to address the issue of the disabled, adoption of a UN Declaration on Indigenous People's, as well as adoption of several commendable Programmes of Action for various social groups. However, international action needs to be commensurate with appropriate national action at governmental level.

Madam Chair,

There is no 'one size fits all' solution for social integration at the national level. As most countries have evolved their own policies and programmes for social integration, this multidimensional concept still needs to be well understood and addressed. This is particularly important now, as the world is passing through difficult financial and food crises, which has a direct impact on various national programmes. More so, these exacerbate social imbalance, and makes vulnerable groups more susceptible. This also leads to social tensions, further threatening social cohesion. The Commission for Social Development has rightly identified social integration as the priority area for 2009-2010. This will encourage a closer evaluation by all of the concept of social integration and help countries to learn from each others experience.

Madam Chair,

In India, we have been using a social integration approach since our independence by ensuring that despite different backgrounds, age, sex, ethnicity, religion or region, social development is accessible to all and there is no barrier to anyone in his or her overall development. To illustrate this, in our Constitution, we have introduced the concept of universal adult suffrage for all citizens of India, above 21 years, regardless of sex, ethnicity, religion, physical status. Also, all regions have been given proportionate representation, based on the total population, in the national Parliament. The concept of grassroots governance also matured as we enacted the Panchayati Raj System in the 1990s, enabling each village to elect its own decision making body at the village level, to decide on developmental activities. This concept is a unique example of social integration, as reservations have been provided to various

communities as well as to women to get elected so that they can actively decide on social development programmes affecting their community in a targeted manner. The framers of our Constitution were right. As the authority on constitutional law, Granville Austin, said: "The leaders' leap of faith that constitutional democracy and a constitutionally pursued social revolution would succeed" has "been justified". The social Jacobinism of the formerly marginalised has been expressed entirely through democratic electoral politics and has led to equality of groups and not just individuals, leading to social integration.

In order to address an affirmative government role in improving the economic conditions of the society, a series of five year developmental programmes have been introduced. Currently, we are implementing the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan for the period 2007-12. These programmes use the concept of social integration to mainstream policies and programmes in all sectors by evolving a comprehensive strategy with an inclusive development philosophy. Thus, the current Five Year Plan, with the objective of empowering women politically, educationally, economically and legally, has made gender a cross-cutting theme in all its programmes. Apart from planning from above, there is grass root mobilisation from below. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme not only gives 100 days employment to every rural household and greatly improves wage levels but, because it is demand-driven, has been revolutionary instrument of empowerment, of breaking down social inequalities and ensuring social dignity.

Madam Chair,

In addition to making the process of social integration inclusive and participatory by including all in governance, a significant process of transparency has also been introduced in India in 2005, with the enactment of 'Right to Information' Act. By it, each citizen is given a right to seek information regarding government action or inaction, thereby, lending a voice to the citizens to review Government policies. This has also encouraged a more participatory approach by people and has made government functionaries more responsive and accessible to society in general and people in particular.

Mainstreaming of social policies into macroeconomic policies is necessary, not just at the national level, but also at the international level. Poverty, ignorance and disease still afflict millions of people and the commitment to achieve the ambitious targets set by the Millennium Development Goals, which is essential not just for global prosperity and welfare, but also for social development, still remains a challenge. With the current financial crisis exacerbating this challenge, there is a greater need for developed countries to fulfil their commitment of transferring financial resources to the developing countries and reaching the target of 0.7% of Gross National Income as ODA as a matter of priority.

Madam Chair,

In conclusion, we reiterate our resolve to promote social development and achieve greater social integration of youth, senior citizens, the disabled, women and other groups in national and international economic activities. Towards this end, we welcome the priority theme of social integration of the Commission and hope that the outcome of its deliberations will help states to develop more socially inclusive and cohesive development policies and programmes in future.

I thank you, Madam Chair.

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