



**INDIA**  
**भारत**

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**STATEMENT BY**  
**AMBASSADOR BHAGWANT SINGH BISHNOI,**  
**DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE**  
**ON THE**  
**"FOLLOW UP TO THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION**  
**OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**  
**ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT BEYOND 2014"**  
**AT THE**  
**69TH SESSION OF THE**  
**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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**Mr. President,**

Thank you for giving my delegation the floor.

As we mark the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, India remains committed to the consensus reached at the ICPD as well as its subsequent reviews and outcome documents. These recognize the dynamic inter-linkages amongst economic and sustainable development with issues of population, gender equality and empowerment of women, human rights, urbanization and migration. Our commitment is evident in our policies and programmes – where much progress has been recorded during the last two decades.

**Mr. President,**

India has achieved substantial declines in infant and maternal mortality rates as a consequence of targeted interventions to promote institutional deliveries, and other interventions comprising provision of free medicines, diagnostics, nutrition, etc. The proportion of institutional birth has now reached 85% and the Government is working to further expand this programme.

Securing and promoting health and well-being of young people especially adolescents, women and children is a priority. Reproductive health commodities and services including Comprehensive Abortion Care are now one of the 20 essential services of Universal Health Coverage to be provided absolutely free of cost. Besides increasing financial commitment to health services, India continues to sustain the coverage of 100 million women currently using contraceptives and is committed to adding 48 million new clients by 2020 as its commitment to Family Planning 2020.

Overall our focus is currently on expanding healthcare for all as well as to meet the challenges both due to shifts in demographic profile and gradual shift of burden from communicable to non-communicable diseases.

In education, our current focus is on improving quality, expansion of secondary and tertiary education, improving equity and accessibility for girls and women, and skills development for improved employability.

We have recently launched a National Adolescent Health Strategy, which comprises provision of information, counselling, commodities and services, and which will cover all our 250 million adolescents. This Strategy re-aligns the existing approaches to focus on community based health promotion and prevention. It identifies six priority areas of action: reproductive and sexual health, nutrition, mental health, injuries and violence including domestic and gender based violence, substance misuse as well as non-communicable diseases.

**Mr. President,**

Ensuring gender equality, promoting women's empowerment and combating discrimination and violence against women remain a priority. We have adopted both enabling legislative and policy frameworks for advancement of women and undertaken awareness generation and sensitization programmes to fight social prejudices and stereotypes. The Government has launched a new rights-based, non-discriminatory, adolescent-friendly programme that reaches out to 250 million strong adolescent population.

We are firmly addressing the problem of violence against women. The amendments to the criminal law last year significantly broadens the definition of sexual assault and harassment; includes new types of violent behavior such as voyeurism, stalking, etc.; and aim for greater accountability of public officials. The Sexual Harassment at Work Place Act aims to provide a safer environment for women to work. These measures supplement the existing framework to deal with the crimes of trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual offences against children.

The government has also developed protocols for police and investigating agencies, medical functionaries, lawyers, and other service providers, to improve coordinated multi-sectoral response to meet the needs to women victims of violence.

As part of a multi-sectoral approach to violence against women, and following on our statement at the 66<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly last year, the Government of India worked with experienced activists from civil society, legal and mental health experts to bring out our Guidelines and Protocols for Medico-Legal Care for Survivors of Sexual Violence.

**Mr. President,**

We are all aware of the benefits and challenges associated with urbanization with attendant implications for the environment, social welfare and the economy. Dealing with these issues is a major preoccupation of policy-makers in India. A fundamental premise underpinning our policies is that rural and urban areas are inter-dependent and must grow together.

**Mr. President,**

India has been proactive in sharing its development experience with other developing countries including in the areas of healthcare and tele-medical services. India is also a major source of cost-effective, good quality generic medicines, which are critical to public health strategies in many developing countries.

The Secretary General's report on the 'Framework of action for the follow-up to the PoA of the ICPD beyond 2014' identifies several challenges and opportunities. Given the importance of population and development issues, we expect that these will be adequately reflected in the post-2015 development agenda. The international community must enhance its cooperative and mutually supportive role. Provision of financial resources, transfer of technology, technical assistance, access to medicines or capacity building especially to the developing countries has not reach optimum levels. Greater investments in universal quality education, skill development and health would provide a firm basis for the children and youth to participate in and benefit from development. We must not forget that success of MDGs in each and every country is an imperative for the international community as a whole.

**Mr. President,**

In conclusion, let me reiterate our firm commitment to the International Conference on Population and Development and its Programme of Action and to taking forward the agenda of ICPD beyond 2014 to tackle current challenges both nationally and globally.

Thank you.