High level Inter-Governmental meeting on “Mid-point Review of Asian Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2013-2022)”

Statement

by

JSDC

Beijing 27th November, 2017
Thank you madam chairperson.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates, it is an honour to represent India at this High Level Inter Governmental Meeting on Mid Point Review of the Asian Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022 and we thank the ESCAP and the host country China for organising this meeting and giving us this opportunity.

Madam Chairperson, India has always displayed strong commitment to the principles of the United Nations, and India was one of the first few countries to sign UNCRPD on the first day.
• Consequent upon the signing of the UNCRPD and subsequently being a party to the Incheon Strategy, it was our priority to allign our law in line with UNCRPD.

• India has recently enacted the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act. The Act was unanimously passed by the Indian Parliament in December 2016 and has come into force with effect from 19th April, 2017.

• The new Act has replaced the earlier PwD Act 1995. The new Act identifies twenty one categories of specified disabilities as against seven categories of disabilities included in the earlier Act.
• The new Act has expanded the horizons of the rights and entitlements and other social benefits of Persons with disabilities across all twenty one categories.

• It provides for various rights and entitlements to persons with disabilities such as right to equality and non-discrimination, community life, protection from cruelty, abuse, violence and inhuman treatment, access to justice, home and family and reproductive rights. It mandates the States to take appropriate measures to ensure that the persons with disabilities enjoy their rights equally with others in line with UNCRPD.
• It mandates the Government to frame accessibility standards for creating barrier-free environment for PwDs in all spheres of life i.e. physical infrastructure, transportation system, Information and communication technologies, and also for other facilities and services.

• To promote representation of pwds in Government establishments, reservation has been increased from 3% to 4%.

• The said law also provides a strong mechanism for redressal through District level committees, state commissioners and chief commissioner and through special Courts.
The said law also provides measures to promote health care, community living, skill training, social security, rehabilitation, recreation and sporting activities for persons with disabilities.

Penal provision in the Act would serve as deterrent to ensure better and effective implementation.

We are now focusing on implementation of the Act in consultation with the States and we fore see that implementation of the new law will gather further momentum within 3 to 4 months.

In India for disability specific data we mostly rely on Census figures of 2011. As per this,
there are about 26.8 million persons with disabilities. This figure is likely to go up with better reporting and also with recent inclusion of many new categories within the definition of 'disability'.

However, with a view to strengthen data on PwDs and also to capture disability specific data as per Incheon strategy and sustainable development goal indicators, it has been decided to have a disability specific sample survey in the country so as to generate reliable and comparable data in disability sector, encompassing all relevant social and progressive indicators.
Further, the Government is in the process of implementing Unique Disability Identity (UDID) Project with a view to create a national database for Persons with Disabilities and also to issue Unique Disability Identity card. It will provide authentic and accurate dynamic data on persons with disabilities on a real time basis. So far we have started the project in 306 districts of 11 States/UTs.

Extreme poverty among pwds is being dealt with by strong and effective convergance with key poverty alleviation programmes and allocation of 5% of funds under these
programems is mandatory as per the new law.

- The Government recognises the need to involve the PwDs in policy decision. Accordingly, we have recently constituted the Central Advisory Board on Disability, the apex policy recommending body on disability issues which is represented by 10 members representing pwds/their organisations, out of which five are women.

- Though the Act specifies time line for creation of barrier free environment, the Government has taken up this issue on campaign mode and Accessibility India
Campaign was launched on 3rd December 2015.

- The Government has adopted the Harmonised Guidelines and space standards for pwds and elderly as accessibility standards.

- So far 30 international airports out of 32 have been provided with accessibility features. Similarly, there has been significant progress in railway stations.

- Out of 709 major railway stations in the country, 667 railway stations have been provided with accessibility features. Similarly, efforts are on to provide
accessibility features in state road transport carriers.

● We are actively taking steps to make all Government websites, both in State and Central, accessible as per W3C guidelines.

● We have empanelled access auditors and access audit of 1653 State Government buildings have already been completed and financial assistance is being provided to the states for making necessary retrofitment.

● The States are also providing disability pension, unemployment allowance, marriage allowance as social security programme for pwds. However, the data in
this regard is quite scattered and not uniform across states.

- The Government is also implementing various scholarship schemes for educational empowerment and schemes for rehabilitation of PwDs.

- India is currently formulating its 15 Year Vision Document, which will be co-terminus with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As part of this exercise, a draft Three-Year Action Agenda was recently released. Persons with disabilities find significant mention in this agenda.

- With a view to prevent disability, the new law mandates mandatory screening of all
school going children every year. India has taken significant steps for early detection and prevention of disability and is implementing various programmes in this regard. Some of these programmes include Universal Immunisation Programme; National Programme for Control of Blindness; Pulse-Polio Programme; National Mental Health Programme; National Iodine Deficiency Disorders Control programme; National Programme for Prevention and Control of Deafness; National Programme for Prevention and Control of Flurosis. Moreover, the Government is also implementing Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakarm, a childhood screening
programme to screen all children upto 18 years of age. This programme aims at early detection of 4 D's (birth defects, diseases, deficiencies and development delay including disability). The children screened positive for these conditions are referred to district early intervention centre for evaluation, confirmation and management. Because of the consistent effort of the Government and Civil Society Organisations and other stakeholders, India has been declared polio free which was one of the major contributors for locomotor disability.

- The Government has established the National Disaster Management Authority
(NDMA). Such bodies at state level have also been constituted. The National Disaster Management Plan takes care of issues concerning pwd's. A separate standard operating procedure has already been developed to deal with emergency situations involving pwd's.

- There are seven National Institutes specializing in different types of disabilities to promote research and conduct training to facilitate better delivery of services to persons with disabilities. The Government has recently established Indian Sign Language Research & Training Centre to
promote training, research and standardization of sign language in India.

- Empowerment of persons with disabilities is an inter-disciplinary process, covering various aspects namely, prevention, early detection, intervention, education, vocational training, rehabilitation and social integration.

- India is one of the fastest economies in the world. This economic development is inclusive of pwds.

- Besides giving priority to implementation of the new law, we are also committed to developing reliable and comparable data on pwds.
We remain committed to building an enabling environment for the persons with disabilities and are open to sharing of best practices and international cooperation for the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities.