

Statement of India
79th Commission Session of the United Nations ESCAP
Agenda 4 (b): Social Development

Madam Chair,

As the world recovers from the effects of a global pandemic and other contemporary global challenges, India prepares to enter its *Amrit Kaal*, an era where economic growth is supported by social welfare. India today is committed to leave no one behind, and ensure that the impact and benefits of its growth and progress reach all in its diverse and expansive populace, transcending innumerable cultures, languages, and geographies, constituting the real wealth of the country.

To commemorate 75 years of India's independence, the Government released the "Best Practices in Social Sector: A Compendium, 2023" on 1 May 2023 in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme. This compendium includes 75 case studies cutting across 14 key social sectors.. These 75 best practices highlight models which are innovative, sustainable, replicable and impactful. The aim of this exercise is to synthesise lessons for the future to expand, enhance and improve life at the grassroots level. The cases identified are spread over diverse themes, including education, health and nutrition, e-governance and digitization, agriculture, women's empowerment, sports, and financial inclusion, among others. This document is not only significant for peer learning among states, but also an important source for other countries to learn from India's successes, as remarked by Resident Representative of UNDP India.

Madam Chair,

Among the initiatives taken by India for senior citizens, the National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP) was announced in January 1999 for the well-being of the older persons. The Policy envisages State support to ensure financial and food security, health care, shelter and other needs of older persons, equitable share in development, protection against abuse and exploitation, and availability of services to improve the quality of their lives. The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (MWPSA) Act was enacted in December 2007 to provide more effective provisions for the maintenance and welfare of parents and senior citizens. The Act includes provision for food, clothing,

residence, healthcare, recreation, protection of life and property, and other amenities necessary for senior citizens to lead a normal life.

In addition to the above, Government of India has implemented various schemes and programmes for care and welfare of senior citizens. A few examples are - Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC) under which grants-in-aid are given for running and maintenance of Old Age Homes/ Continuous Care Homes, Mobile Medicare Units etc.; Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY) under which aids and assistive living devices such as walking sticks, elbow crutches, walkers/crutches, tripods/quadpods, hearing aids, wheelchairs, artificial dentures, spectacles etc. are provided to poor senior citizens; Seniorcare Aging Growth Engine (SAGE) for providing equity support to selected start-ups/start-up ideas to encourage development of innovative products, processes and services for the welfare of the elderly; National Old Age Pension Scheme; National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly etc.

To support and ensure economic independence of senior citizens, the SACRED (Senior Able Citizens for Re-Employment in Dignity) Portal, launched in 2021, provides a platform to match senior citizens, willing to be re-employed after retirement from regular job at 60 years, with private enterprises for certain positions. A National Helpline for Senior Citizen has been launched in October 2021 to address the grievance of the elders across the country.

Madam Chair,

India has a separate Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), set up in May 2012 with the aim to facilitate empowerment and inclusion of the persons with disabilities and acts as a nodal agency to look after all development agenda of Persons with Disabilities (*Divyangjan*). Empowerment of persons with disabilities is an inter-disciplinary process, covering various aspects namely, prevention, early detection, intervention, education, health, vocational training, rehabilitation and social integration.

India has been amongst the first few countries to ratify the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in October 2007. To bring the national legislation on disability in conformity with the UNCRPD, the Government enacted Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016 with effect from 19 April 2017. This Act provides and

protects the rights and entitlements of persons with disabilities, which, inter-alia, include non-discrimination, protection from abuse, violence and exploitation, community life, legal capacity, access to justice, inclusion, accessibility, etc.

The Act provides 4% reservation in government job for persons with benchmark disabilities and also mandates every establishment to ensure equal opportunity policy at work place. The Government is implementing the National Action Plan (NAP) for Skill Development of PwDs with a view to create an end-to-end implementation framework through developing a network of quality training providers. It provides opportunities for quality long and short-term skill training, gainful employment and ensuring career progression that meets the aspirations of PwD trainees.

Madam Chair,

India is also a party to the Incheon Strategy to Make the Right Real for Persons with Disabilities and participated in the high level inter-Governmental meeting for final review of the implementation of the Incheon Strategy for Asia Pacific decade of persons with disabilities held at Jakarta in October 2022.

The Government invariably follows the principle of stakeholder consultation while framing rules, regulations, guidelines, schemes, etc., meant for empowerment of PwDs. They are included in various Committees constituted by the Government from time to time.

The Government launched Accessible India Campaign, a flagship programme, to create barrier free environment in physical infrastructure, transport and Information and Communication Technology eco system for persons with disabilities. We are making steady progress in making our public infrastructure accessible. All 35 International airports and 55 Domestic Airports in India have been made accessible and all 709 major railway stations have been provided with accessible facilities. Nearly 727 Central and State/UT government websites have been made accessible. The Government is also working on sector specific accessibility standards for promoting accessibility in various services.

Thank you.