Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 Review at UNCC, Bangkok, Thailand

27–29 November 2019

Agenda Item: 2

Review of the progress and remaining challenges in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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Country Statement of India

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Madam Chair,
Madam Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of my delegation, let me congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election as the Chair of this important conference.

2. I would like to convey India’s appreciation to UN-ESCAP for organising the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 Review and the arrangements made for conducting the meeting. This important conference will lay out the road map for the Governments in the Asia Pacific region for women’s empowerment.

Madam Chair,

3. When the Beijing Declaration was adopted unanimously in 1995, it was a landmark move in the history of women’s rights, recognising that gender equality is the key to irreversible change and sustainable development for all. India has always been at the forefront of multilateral action in the implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and is also one of the signatories to the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on Child Rights.

4. India strongly believes that women are equal partners in socio-economic transformation and development. The principle of gender equality is firmly enshrined in the Constitution of India, which also provides for affirmative action for empowering
women. India recognises the importance of mainstreaming of a gender-responsive approach in the provision of public services, economic empowerment and social protection.

Madam Chair,

5. Our Prime Minister has been a vocal proponent of women empowerment and inclusive growth and has highlighted India’s shift from “women development to women-led development”, where the discourse on women’s empowerment is rapidly progressing from viewing women as recipients of welfare benefits to mainstreaming women’s concerns.

6. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development places equality at the centre of national policymaking with the call to “leave no one behind”. India has launched a number of important flagship schemes which address our national concerns on Health, Education, Environment, Irrigation, Urban & Rural Development, Employment and other sectors, which is also in line with the Indian government’s commitment to sustainable economic and social development including empowerment of women.

7. Government of India has introduced several significant initiatives for furthering gender equality. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (save the girl child, educate the girl child) scheme has been effective in protecting the girl child and supporting her welfare. Through conditional cash transfers, women have been provided partial wage compensation for wage loss during child birth and child care.

8. For securing the health of home-makers in rural areas we have embarked upon a programme to deliver 80 million free gas cylinder connections. More than 70 million gas connections have already been provided under Ujjwala Yojana which has not only a positive impact on their health, but has also reduced the drudgery associated with collecting firewood. A Multi-Ministerial National Mission (Poshan Abhiyaan) launched in 2018, is targeted on making India mal-nutrition free by 2022 by ensuring
convergence across various schemes for children under six years of age, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

9. Gender Budgeting has been adopted by India, which entails maintaining a gender perspective from the stage of policy formulation to its impact assessment. The National Crèche Scheme provides day care facilities to children of working women.

**Madam Chair,**

10. Mahila Shakti Kendras (Women Empowerment Centres) have been launched as one-stop convergence support service for women with opportunities for skill development, digital literacy, health and nutrition and employment with student volunteers ensuring that all schemes can be accessed by rural women.

11. Reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (local government) has led to more than 1.37 million elected women representatives taking active part in the decision making process, and formulating and implementing gender sensitive public policies across India. The Government of India has also taken up the training of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in Panchayats to empower them to govern their villages effectively and to develop into grassroot change makers.

12. The Government is taking active steps to ensure the safety and security of women at the workplace as well as in public spaces. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place Act 2013 and amendments to the Indian criminal law in 2013 and 2018 provide further enabling environment for women to participate in economic activities.

**Madam Chair,**

13. Several laws have been passed and, further, to ensure safety of women in public places, the Government of India had set up a dedicated and non-lapsable fund called Nirbhaya Fund in 2013, for the implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security of women in the country.
14. One Stop Centres are being set-up in all districts of the country with essential services to assist violence affected women with medical aid, police assistance, legal aid, psycho-social counselling and temporary support services; all under one roof. The scheme of Universalisation of Women Helpline is exclusively designed to provide 24 hour emergency response through a dedicated number throughout the country to all women affected by violence both in public and private sphere.

15. The Government has launched the Women Safety initiative of Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) in 20 States/Union Territories through a single toll-free pan India number. Under the system, the women in need of emergency support can be connected to a single emergency services number which combines Police, Fire, Health and other helplines. For ensuring safety and security of women in public transport system, cab safety measures have also been put in place.

Madam Chair,

16. The Equal Remuneration Act, provides for equal remuneration to men and women for equal work of similar nature without any discrimination. Government of India has recently amended the Maternity Benefit Act to extend the period of mandatory paid maternity leave for working women from 12 weeks to 26 weeks.

17. To ensure accessibility of women to health care services, with a special focus on sexual and reproductive rights and to address under nutrition amongst women, the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), a flagship maternity benefit programme has been launched to promote appropriate practice, care and institutional service utilization during pregnancy, delivery and lactation by providing cash incentives in Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode to pregnant and lactating mothers. Till date, more than 10 million beneficiaries have been benefitted under the scheme. To provide holistic post-natal care to the mother and child and promote institutional deliveries, the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) and Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK) under the National Health Mission (NHM) has been implemented.
18. To bring about socio-economic empowerment of women, the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) is providing micro-credit facilities to women and capacity building of Intermediary Organizations and women beneficiaries. For the economic advancement of women, the “Mahila e-Haat” Portal has been launched by the Government, which is a unique direct online digital marketing platform to support women entrepreneurs, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and NGOs.

19. India remains committed to strengthening cooperation in advancing the goals of gender equality and empowerment of all women to ensure that women and men are accorded equal treatment and enjoy the same opportunities everywhere. I would also like to reiterate India’s firm commitment to its international obligations under the Beijing Platform for Action and other international instruments and look forward to engaging constructively and proactively with the global community for an irreversible progress towards gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.

Thank You Madam Chair