



**ECOSOC High Level Political Forum, 2020
“Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of
action and delivery for sustainable development”**

General Debate

Statement by H.E. Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairperson, NITI Aayog

July 14, 2020

India Statement

Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I express my warm solidarity with all countries in these challenging times brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. We all live in a world which is increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Today, countries, in addition to the pandemic, are also dealing with several pressing challenges including climate change. All these challenges yet again underscore the need for multilateralism and global solidarity.

Therefore, the Sustainable Development Goals are more important than ever before. Faster implementation of SDGs can put countries on the path of inclusive and sustainable recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. Our Hon'ble Prime Minister has reminded us that people, planet and profits are interlinked, and our decisions should be people centric and planet friendly.

Madam President,

India is one of the world's most vibrant market economies and, through consistent growth and social inclusion initiatives, has made significant progress towards the SDGs. We have been able to lift 271 million people from multidimensional poverty. There is near-universal access to bank accounts, expanded financial and digital inclusion, promotion of entrepreneurship and rural employment guarantee resulting in increased incomes. Programmes aimed at universal access to housing, sanitation, quality education, health protection, and clean energy are improving the quality of life of the most vulnerable. Since the advent of the 2030 Agenda, we have expanded access to clean cooking fuel to over 80 million households in need; built over 110 million toilets in rural areas to improve sanitation; and added over 385 million accounts for the unbanked-majority of them women. Simultaneously, our technology-driven Direct Benefit Transfer system has been instrumental in delivering ambitious programmatic interventions and in improving the efficiency of public service delivery. Our food security programmes are successfully addressing issues of malnourishment among children and women. India has a robust institutional framework for protection of peoples' rights, maintenance of peace and social justice. The Right to Information Act and strengthening of several other accountability legislations have resulted in greater transparency in governance.



Madam President,

Government of India's response to the pandemic has been articulated through the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of an *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* or a Self-Reliant India. It has been operationalised through a stimulus package of USD 276 billion, which is 10 per cent of India's GDP, and includes several reform and relief measures across numerous sectors to protect lives and livelihoods, spur investment and employment, and safeguard the interest of frontline workers.

Madam President,

The principle of Leaving no One Behind resonates with our Constitution. The needs and aspirations of our 1.3 billion people of socio, economic and cultural diversities, continue to guide our actions.

India presented its second Voluntary National Review at the High-Level Political Forum, this year. The processual feature of India's VNR entailed working with all the stakeholders – sub-national governments, civil society, academia, think tanks and business forums - to ensure that it embodies a “whole of the society” approach.

NITI Aayog and partners from Civil Society, Community and Business organisations, joined hands to curate a consultative process that saw more than 50 national and sub-national consultations led by CSOs from fourteen population groups. Women, children, persons with disabilities, elderly, LGBTQIA+, people living with HIV/AIDS and people in vulnerable situations were consulted, and their voices and rich insights have formed an integral part of our VNR. This has become a conduit for institutionalised dialogue and engagement in the future. Our engagement with CSOs, NGOs and community organisations has continued well beyond the VNR process, with more than 92,000 NGOs working with the Government on the COVID-19 response.

Our VNR process also included consultations with the private sector. Partnership with the private sector is already showing initial results in high-impact areas of financial inclusion, skill and entrepreneurship development, health & medical technology, renewable energy and resilient infrastructure - all critical to achieving the SDGs. With the private sector stepping up in the fight against COVID-19, India is fast developing affordable and innovative solutions to counter the impacts of the pandemic.

Madam President,

The role of international cooperation is more critical than ever before. India is proud to be at the forefront to strengthen global partnerships and is committed to South-South Cooperation, particularly to address the issues of climate change, desertification and land degradation. India is committed to tackle the impact of climate change and support efforts of developing countries especially LDCs,



LLDCs and SIDS to achieve their developmental goals through necessary assistance. As a consequence, India has actively promoted the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure (CDRI), and is actively participating in implementing the Sendai Framework, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Paris Climate Agreement. India is supporting developing countries through the India-UN Partnership fund, and its neighbours through the SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund and the SAARC COVID19 Information Exchange Platform. During this crisis, India has extended humanitarian relief, supplied essential drugs to over 120 countries across the world, and has activated its network to deliver medical expertise for training of healthcare personnel in the region.

Madam President,

As we enter the Decade of Action, India reiterates its commitment to the principles of sustainable development and the targets set under the SDG framework. We will continue to engage with multiple stakeholders for accelerating progress towards the SDGs and are determined to keep to adhere to the call of Collective Efforts for Inclusive Growth (Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas) with sustainability at its core.

We must remind ourselves that our collective actions in the decade of action and delivery will be pivotal to the aspirations and ambitions of our future generations. This alone, should motivate us to do our best. And together, we will.

I thank you.