

ECOSOC High-Level Segment, 2020
“Multilateralism after COVID 19: What kind of UN do we need at the 75th anniversary?”
INDIA STATEMENT
By
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Prime Minister of India
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Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year we celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. It is an occasion to recognise the UN's many contributions to human progress. It is also an opportunity to assess the UN's role and relevance in today's World, and to shape a better future for it.

Excellencies,

India was among the 50 founding members of the United Nations immediately after the Second World War. A lot has changed since then. Today the UN brings together 193 member countries. Along with its membership, the expectations from the organisation have also grown. At the same time multilateralism is facing many challenges today.

Excellencies,

From the very beginning, India has actively supported the UN's development work and the ECOSOC. The first president of ECOSOC was an Indian. India also contributed to shaping the ECOSOC agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals. Today, through our domestic efforts, we are again playing a salient role in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. We are also supporting other developing countries in meeting their Sustainable Development Goals.

Excellencies,

India is home to one-sixth of humanity. We are mindful of our weight and responsibility. We know that if India succeeds in achieving its development objectives, it will go a long way in achievement of global goals. And so we have taken "whole-of-society" approach- by engaging our States, our local governments, our civil society, communities and our people.

Our motto is 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikaas, Sabka Vishwas'- meaning 'Together, for everyone's growth, with everyone's trust'. This resonates with the core SDG principle of leaving no one behind. Be it access to nutrition, health education, electricity or housing - we are making great progress through our inclusive programmes.

Excellencies,

Last year, we celebrated the 150th birth anniversary of the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, by achieving full sanitation coverage in our six hundred thousand villages.

In five years, we built over 110 million household toilets, which improved our rural sanitation cover from 38 % to 100 %. Our massive awareness generation programmes are empowering our women. We have achieved gender parity in elementary and secondary education. Nearly 70 million women in rural India are part of self-help groups under our Livelihood Mission. They are transforming lives and livelihoods on a big scale. Over a million women are elected representatives of our local governments, leading the process of participatory development. In the last six years, we opened 400 million bank accounts for the unbanked, out of which 220 million are owned by women. We have leveraged the power of technology for financial inclusion. This is based on the trinity of a unique identity number, a bank account, and a mobile connection for everyone. It has allowed us to make Direct Benefit Transfers of 150 billion dollars to over 700 million persons. Our food security programmes reach 813 million citizens.

Our 'Housing for All' programme will ensure that every Indian will have a safe and secure roof over her head by 2022, when India completes 75 years as an independent nation. By then, 40 million new homes would have been made under this programme - more than the total number of households in many countries. Today, our 'Ayushman Bharat' scheme is the world's largest health protection programme, covering 500 million individuals. In the fight against COVID, our grass-roots health system is helping India ensure one of the best recovery rates in the world. We are also on track to remove TB by 2025. Other developing countries can learn from the scale and success of India's development programmes. And from the technologies and innovations we have deployed. It is this realisation that under-pins India's own development partnership with the global South.

Excellencies,

While marching forward on the path to development, we are not forgetting our responsibility towards our planet. Over the past few years, we have reduced 38 million tonnes of carbon emissions annually. This was achieved by electrifying our villages, providing clean cooking fuel to 80 million poor households, and introduction of energy efficient measures. We have set a target to install 450 Gigawatt of renewable energy and restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030. We have an age-old tradition of living in harmony with nature. We launched one of the largest campaigns for cleanliness and discouraged usage of single-use plastic. Internationally, our Initiative to set up the International Solar Alliance was a practical manifestation of climate action. Similarly, the Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure brings together all relevant stake-holders for a comprehensive approach. We have always prided ourselves as the first responder in our region - a friend in need. Be it earthquakes, cyclones or any other natural or man-made crisis, India has responded with speed and solidarity. In our joint fight against COVID, we have extended medical and other assistance to over 150 countries. We also helped create a SAARC COVID emergency fund in our neighborhood.

Excellencies,

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely tested the resilience of all nations. In India, we have tried to make the fight against the pandemic a people's movement, by combining the efforts of Government and society. We have given the highest priority to deliver benefits to poor households. We have announced a package of more than 300 billion dollars. It will bring the economy back on track, build modern infrastructure and put in place a technology-driven system. We have put forward a vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' a self-reliant and Resilient India, integrated with the global economy.

Excellencies,

India firmly believes that the path to achieve sustainable peace and prosperity is through multilateralism. As children of planet Earth, we must join hands to address our common challenges and achieve our common goals. However, multilateralism needs to represent the reality of the contemporary world. Only reformed multilateralism with a reformed United Nations at its center can meet the aspirations of humanity. Today, while celebrating 75 years of the United Nations, let us pledge to reform the global multilateral system. To enhance its relevance, to improve its effectiveness, and to make it the basis of a new type of human-centric globalisation. The United Nations was originally born from the furies of the Second World War. Today, the fury of the pandemic provides the context for its rebirth and reform. Let us not lose this chance.

Excellencies,

India has been elected to the United Nations Security Council at this very important time. With our deep commitment to maintaining global harmony, to improving socio-economic equity and to preserving nature's balance, India will play its role in full support of the UN agenda.

Namaskar.

Thank you.
