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INDIA

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## **COUNTRY STATEMENT**

**by**

**Her Excellency Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman,  
Minister of State (Independent Charge) for  
Commerce and Industry,  
Government of India**

**at the plenary of the  
71<sup>st</sup> UNESCAP Commission Session**

**Bangkok**

**28 May 2015**



## **Statement of India**

### **Ministerial Segment**

#### **71<sup>st</sup> Commission Session of the United Nations ESCAP**

##### ***Policy Issues for the Asia-Pacific Region***

*"Balancing the Three Dimensions of Sustainable Development: From Integration to Implementation"*

**Mr. Chairman,  
Madam Executive Secretary,  
Excellencies, Ministers,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Firstly, let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, for your election as Chair and for your effective management of the session. I would also like to, at this time, take this opportunity to express the Government of India's full support and solidarity with the people and government of Nepal in the wake of the devastating earthquakes in April and May that destroyed the lives of thousands of people in Nepal.

The Government of India wishes to reaffirm its commitment to ESCAP and its role in regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific. India remains privileged to host the ESCAP's Sub-Regional Office for South and South-West Asia in New Delhi and looks forward to the further strengthening of the office and expansion of its work for capacity-building and engagement with its 10 member States.

The theme topic of the ESCAP's 71<sup>st</sup> Commission Session, *"Balancing the Three Dimensions of Sustainable Development: From Integration to Implementation"* is timely in this year of transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are likely to be adopted by the world leaders later this year at the UN Summit. Hence, our discussion here can provide an important regional perspective for the evolving post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

Bringing development to all our people is the key priority for India. This can only be done by providing access to affordable energy, housing, healthcare, basic services, education and decent employment and an enabling environment that bridges infrastructure gaps and leads to economic growth and sustainable development pathways. Despite considerable success having been achieved in meeting the MDG goals, we live in a world that has hundreds of million people still living in abject poverty and without access to basic services and opportunities.

As we move towards adoption of SDGs, it is our duty to continue to keep poverty eradication at the centre of this development agenda. It is also important to recognize that to achieve poverty eradication, inclusive and sustainable economic growth is essential. Growth is needed to create jobs, sustain poverty reduction and maintain socio-political stability and provide resources for poverty reduction programmes. Without economic growth, gains in other developmental indicators are simply not possible. This is borne out of our experience of the MDGs as well.

I take this opportunity to reiterate that for India and developing countries of Asia and the Pacific, accelerating and sustaining broad-based and pro-poor economic growth is essential to provide the foundation for more inclusive development. With the reforms being pursued by my Government, the Indian economy is expected to return to the pre-crisis growth trajectory of about 9 per cent in a couple of years. India has launched in 2014 the 'Skill India' mission and the 'Make in India' programmes coupled by enhancing the ease of doing business to provide an enabling framework for manufacturing revival, innovation and entrepreneurship for productive job creation for India's youthful population. This is complemented with the work of newly constituted Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship on targeting in the first instance 50 million individuals through vocational and technical training frameworks, upgrading existing skills and creating new skills.

India is pursuing sustainable development and inclusive growth through technological solutions that revolutionize the implementation of social protection systems and delivery in India. India has prioritized usage of e-governance as a powerful tool for empowerment, increased accountability, transparency and service delivery. India is focused on the goal of universal access and inclusion in the formal financial system through the Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana programme, a national mission that has already provided 125.5 million basic bank accounts to ensure every person has access to finance and financial services.

Sustaining India's dynamism and inclusive development also requires infrastructural gaps to be closed. It has been estimated that India needs investment of about US\$ 1 trillion in new infrastructure over the next few years and innovative solutions are being sought for meeting this massive requirement. The Government of India is considering modern, clean and innovative solutions to total rural electrification, including solar energy and other renewable energy sources, and off-grid solutions.

India has set an ambitious target to increase production of renewable energy fivefold by 2019 and halve energy imports by 2030, despite population and demand growth. The Government of India has revised targets for the National Solar Mission and we have now set a target of creating 100 Giga Watts of solar power capacity by 2022, compared to the initial plan of 20 Giga Watts. Similarly, new target set under the

National Wind Energy Mission is expected to generate annual addition capacity of 10 Giga Watts every year.

The growing pace of urbanization in India leading to doubling of urban population would require huge expansion of urban infrastructure. The 100 Smart Cities Programme initiated by the Government of India is a major step towards achieving significantly higher levels of resource efficiency and environmental sustainability. A rapid upgrade of urban infrastructure and online services to citizens, enabled by Information Technology is envisioned through the smart city initiative. Upon realization, the smart cities will serve as ideal models in reliable utility services, health care, modern commercial activities as well as various citizen centric services.

Complementing sustainable urbanization, the Government of India has launched "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" or Clean India Mission, which will be an integral part of our green growth strategy. In addition to universal sanitation, this national campaign aims for scientific processing and recycling of municipal and industrial solid waste. The target will be achieved through active private-sector participation in capital investments for sanitary and waste management facilities.

We recognize that for Asia and the Pacific trade and investment has acted as engines of growth. While recognizing the work of ESCAP in this regard, I would suggest ESCAP to work on (i) research and analysis of the inclusive and sustainable development aspects of trade and investment, including easy transfer of technology to the developing countries; (ii) mechanisms within the framework of the Doha Declaration which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the TRIPS agreement regarding flexibilities to protect public health and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all; (iii) identify the trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets including all forms of agricultural export subsidies and export measures which are adversely affecting the exports of developing countries of Asia and the Pacific and (iv) enhance capacity of WTO members of Asia-Pacific especially the LDCs on how to successfully negotiate the special and differential treatment provisions in the Doha Round.

It is a matter of satisfaction that the UN General Assembly has welcomed the Open Working Group (OWG) report and mandated that its proposal be the main basis for integrating the SDGs into the Post-2015 Development Agenda. It is important to bear in mind that the proposal of the OWG represents a delicately balanced political compromise between member states. It would be important to maintain an element of policy flexibility. A one-size-fits-all approach will not be beneficial. Different starting points of different countries, and their specific national circumstances must be the basis for crafting national level targets. I am pleased to note that the OWG outcome prioritizes ending poverty as the headline goal and builds on the MDG imperatives on

which progress globally has been uneven. The emphasis on the role of robust and sustained economic growth, industrialization, infrastructure and full employment is something India considers very important. The OWG proposals reaffirm the continued validity of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities as the bedrock of international cooperation, preserves national policy space and gives balanced emphasis to the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Furthermore, a universal development agenda requires that developed country partners must also take on obligations in relevant areas. It is our hope that our partners will help us in establishing a supportive international environment to pursue the goals of inclusive and sustainable development. More democratic and inclusive institutions of global governance will be crucial to enable such an environment. At the same time, a critical aspect would be to ensure that the developing countries are assisted in this huge task with adequate financial, technological and other necessary means. We hope we can craft a more positive narrative on means of implementation and an enabling global environment as well in order to build confidence among parties.

Mr. Chairman,

India joins the member states of UNESCAP in working collectively for a sustainable development process which equally benefits all. India attaches great importance to the framework for regional cooperation that ESCAP provides to its members and has been using this framework for extending capacity-building support to fellow member countries including in such high technology areas as remote-sensing and space applications for disaster-risk reduction under ESCAP's Regional Space Applications for Sustainable Development (RESAP). India has been sharing real time satellite data and extending capacity building support with other countries in the region as a part of the RESAP and drought monitoring programme coordinated by ESCAP. India has committed a US\$ 1 million contribution to the ESCAP Trust Fund for Tsunami and other Hazards for supporting capacity-building in early warning especially in South Asian countries.

We look forward to working with the ESCAP member countries in adopting and implementing a truly transformative sustainable development agenda to provide a life of dignity to all.

I thank you.

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