

PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA TO THE UN, GENEVA

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

19<sup>TH</sup> SESSION (27 February-23 March 2012)

**Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing  
(6 March 2012)**

STATEMENT BY INDIA

Madam President,

The delegation of India thanks the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing for their respective reports.

2. In his report, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food has explored the various dimensions of malnutrition such as under-nutrition, micro-nutrient deficiency and over-nutrition leading to increase in non-communicable diseases including heart diseases, high blood pressure etc. leading to pre-mature deaths. In doing so, he has also highlighted their disproportional impact on the poorest segments of the society citing an example from India that cardio-vascular disease leads to catastrophic expenditure for 25% of Indian families, driving 10% of them into poverty. In this regard, India is conscious of the prevalence of malnutrition, especially that of its children. The Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS), launched in 1975, improved from time to time, is a comprehensive programme addressing the health, nutrition and pre-school needs of children under six. It provides a package of services comprising of supplementary nutrition, pre-school non-formal education, nutrition and health education, immunization,

health check-up and referral services. It also aims to improve the nutritional and health status of pregnant and lactating mothers and children below six years of age. The budgetary allocation for this scheme for the current Plan period (11<sup>th</sup> Plan) is Rupees 444 billion. The scheme benefits 97.5 million people including 79.5 million children and 18 million pregnant and lactating mothers.

3. In a paradigm shift from welfare to a rights-based approach and to provide food security to ensure the right to live with dignity, the Government recently introduced the National Food Security Bill in Parliament last December. It seeks to provide food and nutritional security by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to 63.5 % of the country's population. It confers a legal right on women, children and other special groups – destitute, the homeless, disaster and emergency affected persons and persons living in starvation – to receive meals free or at an affordable price. People eligible would be entitled to 7 kgs. of food grains comprising rice, wheat and coarse grains per person per month at very low rates of about approximately less than 5 cents of a dollar per kilogram. In a unique feature, it provides that only women can be treated as head of household for issue of ration card.

4. A crucial part of Government's policy for management of the food economy in India is the Public Distribution System. It is a dual purpose vehicle for giving farmers assured and remunerative prices for their produce through minimum support price and, at the same time, provide food security to the most vulnerable sections of society.

5. As the Special Rapporteur has pointed out investments in agriculture will be futile if they do not result in decreased hunger and

poverty. Government should, therefore, ensure a proper environment for investment in agriculture while observing the interest of small farmers' harmonious rural development and ensuring long-term interest of the people involved. We would like to ask the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on how his thesis of agri-food system transformation fits into a situation where developed countries continue with high subsidies to their farmers to maintain their interests and simultaneously continue with various forms of market access impediments on agricultural products from developing countries. Developing countries, it may be noted, have already opened up their agricultural trade and found that their farmers had to compete with massively subsidized competition from developed countries.

6. We would now like to turn to the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing. As the Special Rapporteur has mentioned in her Report, India has recognized the importance of housing security for women as reflected in the Domestic Violence Act 2005. The 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan has recognized women as agents of sustained economic growth and change resulting in funding for a large number of gender-specific schemes. The amendment of the Hindu Succession Act in 2005 gave daughters equal rights in ancestral property. In a recent ruling in January 2012, Supreme Court directed compliance with Article 21 of the Constitution, i.e the Right to Life by providing night-shelters for the homeless. The Supreme Court has through several milestone decisions reinforced women's rights and the provision of a safe and healthy environment at home and at work. Mandatory registration of the wife in all property-owned or acquired by the husband is another progressive step taken by many State Governments. Government financed ownership schemes such as the Indira Awaas Yojana which is a housing scheme, stresses women's ownership of assets. The allotment is done in

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the name of the female member of the household or in the joint names of husband and wife.

7. In conclusion, Madam President, we would like to thank once again the two Special Rapporteurs for their contributions to the work of the Council and assure them of continued cooperation.

Thank you, Madam President.

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