

PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA TO THE UN, GENEVA

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

16<sup>TH</sup> SESSION (28 February - 25 March 2011)

Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of  
the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-  
discrimination in this context

(08 March 2011)

Statement by India

Mr. President,

We thank the two special procedures for their reports, but would like to confine our remarks to the report by the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context.

2. We support the theme chosen by the Special Rapporteur for her third report, on the importance of integrating human rights standards, particularly the right to adequate housing, in post-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction processes. As the world struggles to cope with the impact of natural disasters and armed conflicts, the focus of the report is both topical and opportune. We share the general concern expressed by the Special Rapporteur in her conclusions and recommendations, in particular with regard

to the effective consultation and direct participation of affected communities in the design and implementation of post-disaster rehabilitation responses.

3. In this regard, we take positive note of the case-study on Gujarat earthquake cited by the Special Rapporteur in paragraphs 42-43 of her report, pointing out the dangers of resorting to rushed, donor-driven reconstruction. In the wake of the Gujarat earthquake in 2001, our experience has revealed the several benefits that can accrue with genuine community participation in the rehabilitation process. It is important to recognize the strengths of an institutionalized mechanism of community involvement and participation, considering that it is the most cost-effective method of implementing a rehabilitation plan. Not only is community participation key to sustainable rehabilitation; it is also a process of empowerment, as it enables the community to take decisions in accordance with its priority and choice. It entails each village and its community developing its own rehabilitation plan, based on needs and entitlements, thereby ensuring that such a plan is appropriate with regard to the local conditions, climatic conditions and way of life. Further, the need for community participation arises from the concern for both equity and accountability. It enables socially and economically weaker sections to claim their entitlements, and is therefore effective in combating discrimination. It also makes the implementing agencies more accountable for their work, and augurs well for greater transparency and probity. Moreover, it generates a strong sense of ownership of recreated assets, and a sense of pride and satisfaction over collective accomplishments, thereby ensuring maintenance and upkeep in the long run.

Mr. President,

4. For a rehabilitation plan to be successful, it must involve people and representative institutions in the decision-making process, help them to make informed choices and reflect their priorities and aspirations in program deliverables. It must also seek to strengthen civil society institutions, community-based organizations, and women's groups through building partnerships and collaborations in the implementation process. In essence, Mr. President, we believe that the scope of a rehabilitation plan must go much beyond the immediate priorities of post-disaster reconstruction, and pursue broader social and economic issues impinging on the household and community-level development and empowerment.

Thank you, Mr. President.

\*\*\*