



**Ministerial Segment
73rd Commission Session of the
United Nations ESCAP**

Agenda Item: 9 (a) Inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific through regional economic cooperation and integration

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Bhagwant Singh Bishnoi,
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Country Statement of India

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Madam/Mr. Chairman,

I congratulate you on your election as Chair of this session and also for your efficient management of the proceedings.

The theme topic of this 73rd Commission Session, “*Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Energy*” is relevant for securing energy needs of people in the region and for enhancing proportion of renewable energy for addressing environmental issues and climate change.

Madam/Mr. Chairman,

Inclusive and sustainable development must eradicate extreme poverty and reach those furthest behind. Our Prime Minister’s call for “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas.” Or the “Participation of All and Development of All” is in line with this. Our approach for transformation is through increased and resilient economic growth accompanied by macroeconomic reform. Our goal is to build an inclusive society through social development with provision of basic needs provision and service delivery, accompanied by investment in environmental sustainability.

India’s continued high growth rates, which are in excess of 7%, have made it one of the fastest growing countries in the world. This is despite global uncertainty and a less friendly environment for openness and multilateralism. The Government of India remains focused on achieving high economic growth rates, going up to 9%, as an engine for India’s transformation towards sustainable development. Recent macroeconomic reforms include the locking in of recent decreases in the fiscal deficit to less than 3% by 2018-2019 under the Government’s Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) framework. The Government’s vision of competitive and cooperative federalism also allows for increased devolution of resources to India’s states, letting each state to prioritize its development and sectoral objectives.

The Government of India continues to take action to improve revenue generation, increase tax collection and lower tax avoidance. In November last year, our demonetization exercise introduced new cash notes and changed regulations and procedures in order to reduce the extent of the cash economy in the country. The exercise also provided a pivotal moment to spur efforts to increase financial inclusion and a move towards a digital India under the “JAM” strategy. Under this, the Government has vigorously pursued universal access to the financial system through bank accounts under the Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) programme (J), adopted the Aadhaar identification card as a key recognized identification document (A), and introduced standards for mobile payment interfaces and interoperability mandated by the Government (M). Complementary to this action, the Government of India is also committed to further reform and efficiency of the public sector through a vision of “maximum governance and minimum government” focused on provision of better and more effective government service delivery. Services such as direct benefit transfers to recipients leverage JAM-based systems to increase delivery, efficiency and transparency.

Madam/Mr. Chairman,

At the forefront of the Government of India efforts for transformation is our national 15-year Vision Document and 7-year strategy that will follow India’s final 5-year plan that ends in 2017. The Government’s peak planning body and think tank, the National Institution for Transforming India, or Niti Aayog, is finalizing the documents that have at their core, an integration of the SDGs in the national context. The Government, through Niti Aayog has also released a draft Three-year Action Agenda for India that is focused on achieving short-term policy changes through transformation of key economic and social sectors and improving environmental sustainability.

India’s development transformation includes a mapping of SDGs to specific national programmes, priorities and targets, and embodies the spirit of the SDGs in terms of tailoring them to India’s development needs. The Government has also been active in raising awareness and capacity for sub-national SDG integration, into state and local government plans, programmes, targets and expenditures. The Government recognizes the support of the United Nations Country Team in India including ESCAP in this respect. The Government through the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) has also developed a series of draft national SDG indicators and invited public comment on them before their adoption as India’s official national SDG indicator monitoring framework.

Madam/Mr. Chairman,

Agricultural transformation in India is critical for the country as the sector represents half of India's workforce but less than one-third its GDP. The Government is committed to doubling farmer's incomes by 2022 and aims to achieve this through investment in agricultural productivity and extension to promote higher value commodities and sustainable increases in yield and crop intensity. Sustainability in agriculture also requires continued reforms and improvements in agricultural markets and pricing, land tenure and smallholder productivity, and increased resilience through initiatives such as the recently announced crop insurance programme, the "*Fasal Bima Yojana*".

India's sustainable development pathway depends upon leveraging a growth in value-added industry and services that will take advantage of our country's youth bulge. The Governments "*Skill India*" mission and "*Make in India*" programmes are the key strategies being implemented to increase vocational skills and productive employment. Building on this, a focus on selected skilled-labour-intensive industries and upskilling key manufacturing and services sectors will ensure India can increase its productivity and become a destination for investment in a skill-based and scalable employment environment with spirit of outward-looking productive innovation and entrepreneurship.

Inclusive and sustainable development for all must be measured by the gains for those furthest behind and those most excluded. The Government continues to improve and expand the the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), that provides 100 days of essential employment to those living in poverty. The Government of India has also prioritized key outcomes in education and health for all through an improvement in the quality of schools and education and the creation of top education institutions. Similarly, for health care, the Government is committed to further health care reform to ensure better quality and universal access with more effective preventative and primary health outcomes through reforms and investments in technologies and health care innovations. Social development priorities also include specific programmes to address women, children, differently abled and older citizens, and those facing disadvantage.

Madam/Mr. Chairman,

India is, of course, fully cognizant that environmental sustainability and sustainable energy and water security must be key factors in supporting its increased population and faster development. India is already committed to national electrification of villages and cities by the end of 2018. At the same time, under the Paris Agreement for Climate Change, India will reduce by 1/3rd its GDP energy intensity by 2030 and increase renewable energy grid contributions to 175 Gigawatts of electricity by 2022. The Government is also actively implementing changes to improve sustainable management of water resources with scarce water supplies under increasing demand by people, agriculture and industry.

Madam/Mr. Chairman,

The Government of India considers regional economic cooperation and integration critical for its transformation towards an inclusive and sustainable developed society. India is also supportive of ESCAP's efforts in this regard. We are committed to building upon our participation in recent initiatives to liberalize trade, increase investment and improve transport links, such as the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Motor Vehicle Agreement.

The Government of India is actively supporting regional cooperation initiatives to improve energy infrastructure connectivity and energy market interactions. India recognizes the strong gains from utilizing supply-demand complementarities through trade, cross-border investments and technical cooperation, particularly for addressing energy through electricity. India supports RECI-related initiatives towards a South Asia Power Grid and South Asia Market for Electricity Trade in Energy Sources-Oil and Gas. India has also committed itself to global leadership in transforming renewable energy industries through the International Solar Alliance to increase cooperation in renewable energy technologies, knowledge and best practices.

In connectivity, India recognizes the importance of transport, trade, digital and people to people connectivity to facilitate and drive more sustainable and inclusive economic development. The Government of India has recognized the importance of improved multimodal transport connectivity links and is committed to active cooperation to develop the two Southern-Central Asia trunk corridors identified by ESCAP as integral parts of the Asian Highway (AH) and Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) networks; (1) Turkey–Iran (Islamic Republic of)–Pakistan–India–Bangladesh–Myanmar (TIPI–BM) Road Corridor and (2) Istanbul–Tehran–

Islamabad–Delhi–Kolkata–Dhaka (ITI–DKD). In digital connectivity, India’s Digital India campaign is committed to creating a digital infrastructure network across the country. This can be complemented by investment in coordinated and cooperative digital linkages with neighbouring member States and other global partners. Application of the ESCAP-led initiative for the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) to increase the availability and affordability of broadband Internet across the region, would directly support this government priority. The Government of India remains committed to increasing cooperation to address shared vulnerabilities and disaster-risk in the region. India reaffirms its commitment to key instruments including the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System (RIMES).

Under the ‘Act East’ policy, we are pursuing the Trilateral Highway project; under our ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy we are developing multimodal linkages with Myanmar and Bangladesh; under our ‘Go West’ strategy, we are engaged with Iran on Chabahar Port and with Iran and other partners in Central Asia on International North South Transport Corridor. BBIN initiative is aimed at enhancing logistics efficiencies in South Asian region. We are also actively considering acceding to TIR Convention.

While India welcomes integration and connectivity in the region, we are of firm belief that connectivity initiatives must be based on universally recognized international norms, good governance, rule of law, openness, transparency and equality. Connectivity initiatives must follow principles of financial responsibility to avoid projects that would create unsustainable debt burden for communities; balanced ecological and environmental protection and preservation standards; transparent assessment of project costs; and skill and technology transfer to help long term running and maintenance of the assets created by local communities. Connectivity projects must be pursued in a manner that respects sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Madam/Mr Chairman,

The Government of India is host to the ESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia and the Asian and Pacific Centre for Technology Transfer in New Delhi. We take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to increased delivery by ESCAP of concrete actions in keeping with its mandate.

Madam/Mr. Chairman,

India looks forward to increased cooperation with ESCAP member States. Working together the countries of Asia and the Pacific can be an example to other regions of a renewed model of productive and coherent regional cooperation that provides concrete gains for our peoples and faster, more inclusive and more sustainable development.

Thank you.
