

**Permanent Mission of India**

**Geneva**

**22<sup>nd</sup> session Human Rights Council**

**Agenda Item 3: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Right to Food and Special Rapporteur on Right to Adequate Housing**

President,

My delegation thanks the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing for their respective reports focussing on topics of relevance and importance to their mandates.

2. The Special Rapporteur on Right to Food has explored the relationship between women's rights and the right to food. It is crucial that societies see women less as passive recipients of help and more as dynamic promoters of social transformation. This strongly buttresses the idea that education, employment and ownership rights of women have a powerful influence on their ability to control their environment and contribute to economic development.

3. The Special Rapporteur has referred to India's Mid-day Meal Scheme and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) which has created employment opportunities and ensured food security for women. The Mid-day Meal Scheme gives preference to women in engagement of cooks cum helpers. The MGNREGA aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. In 2012-13, 52.85% of beneficiaries of this scheme were women.

4. With reference to access to credit, the unique Self Help Group (SHG) movement in India focuses on generating creating capacity building. There are over six million Self Help Groups in India, 90% of which are women. The gender dimension of micro-finance is based on the understanding that the entire household benefits when the loans are given to women. The entire process of forming a group, of functioning in a sustained manner of regulating finances and being mutually accountable is in itself, empowering.

5. The Special Rapporteur has rightly pointed out that improved access to education for girls relieve women from burden of the household chores that women shoulder disproportionately. The Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (*Sabla*) is an inclusive programme designed to upgrade home based skills, life skills and integrate with the National Skills Development Program (NSDP) for vocational skills.

6. I would now like to focus on the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to Adequate Housing and welcome the focus on security of tenure. **In 2001, UN-Habitat launched its global campaign for secure tenure from Mumbai in India.** India recognizes that right to adequate housing is not only an important component of the right to live with dignity but also an obvious component of right to equality. The Supreme Court of India has placed great emphasis on guaranteeing housing rights as part of the larger goal of achieving social and economic equality which is also a fundamental constitutional objective. In order to provide ownership to slum dwellers, the Rajiv Gandhi Awaas Yojana was initiated which provided support to States which are willing to assign property rights to slum dwellers. The National Housing Policy in India (1994) provides that the central and state Governments will encourage *in situ* upgrading, slum renovation and progressive housing development, with conferral of occupancy rights wherever feasible.

7. Strengthening public-private partnerships is an integral element of our housing policies and various schemes are being promoted under the scheme of "Affordable Housing in Partnership". This initiative also intends to provide economic stimulus through job creation, especially for the construction workers and other urban poor who are likely to be amongst the

most vulnerable groups. Habitat policies can only be successful if they take a holistic approach. Promoting employment is a key element in this.

8. Finally, President, I would like to reiterate my delegations' commitment to ensure right to food and right to adequate housing for the people of India and thank the Special Rapporteurs once again for their reports.

Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*

