

Permanent Mission of India to UN
New York

72nd Session
UN General Assembly
September 2017

BACKGROUND and APPROACH

The Setting for 72nd UNGA

The upcoming 72nd session of UN General Assembly (GA) in September 2017 will be the first GA session for the **new Secretary General (SG)** Antonio Guterres. The new UNSG, who took over in January 2017, has submitted **proposals for reform** of UN management, development system and peace and security architecture.

2. A brief overview of the 71st session and India's engagement during the session is at Annex-I.

Broad International Context

3. The broad trends, including the continuing sluggish global economic growth; ongoing armed conflicts in West Asia and parts of Africa that are also causing large movements of refugees; heightened fears of nationalism and protectionism; concerns about financing the sustainable development goals and climate change; and the lack of collective international response to the growing number of terrorist attacks across continents present a picture of some misgiving about the strength of multilateralism.

4. On the other hand, the progress on the **implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement** on Climate Change are among the more positive aspects of the ongoing deliberations at the UN.

Brief Overview of 72nd session

5. The **President** of General Assembly (PGA) for the 72nd session, the Foreign Minister of Slovakia **Miroslav Lajcak** has conveyed that the **theme for 72nd session** will be '**Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet**'. The **PGA-elect visited India** in end-August 2017.

6. The proposals made by the Secretary General for UN reforms; the ongoing consultations and the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations to finalise a Global Compact on Migration; progress being achieved in the implementation of SDGs and Paris Agreement; and the discussions on financing for development and south-south cooperation the deliberations on the challenges faced by peacekeeping and the growing recognition of the importance of sustaining peace; in addition to the deliberations on the reform of Security Council and revitalization of the General Assembly, are some of the issues that will figure prominently in the upcoming session. During the High Level segment, special events are planned on Climate Action (hosted by SG); UN Reform (hosted by US); a Global Compact on

Environment (proposed by France); action against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) – hosted by SG among others.

India's broad Priorities for 72nd Session

7. Our main priority issues will include a continuing push for text-based negotiations on the issue of the **reform of the Security Council**; promoting Indian positions and arguments in the consultations and subsequent inter-governmental negotiations on **migration**; maintaining India's active engagement on issues relating to **sustainable development and climate change**; bringing India's perspective to the debates relating to **human rights** including the right to development, humanitarian assistance; greater say for Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) in finalizing of mandates for UN **peacekeeping** missions; raising India's profile on **peacebuilding** issues; and greater prominence to issues relating to **counter-terrorism**; listing of select individuals/entities under the 1267 **Sanctions Committee**.

8. Mission will actively pursue engagement with select LDCs/SIDS through the newly established **India-UN Development Partnership Fund** to implement projects to support SDGs in partnership with the UN Office of South-South Cooperation (**UNOSSC**). Mission will also continue engagement with the **IBSA Fund** (India-Brazil-South Africa Fund) for south-south cooperation in association with the UNOSSC.

9. Suitable **outreach activities** will be pursued.

UNGA Issues

10. India continues to be engaged with the range of issues relating to **Security Council reform, development and economic relations, human rights, social and cultural issues, law of the sea, budgetary and UN development system** issues. India's suggestions for some concrete improvements in the electoral process, as part of the debate on the **revitalization of the UNGA**, have found broad support. Focus will also grow on the upcoming negotiations on a global compact for **Migration**, and the proposals regarding the **reform of the UN development system**. India has continued to project its longstanding and growing credentials as a **south-south development partner**, especially in the context of financing for development and also its commitment to the idea of global partnership under **SDG 17**, while at the same time highlighting the apparent lack of such commitment on the part of some of the traditional donors.

Security Council Reform

11. The 13th round of the inter-governmental negotiation (IGN) process during the 71st session of the UNGA on the issue of SC reform reflected movement both in terms of the quality of deliberations and the positioning by various negotiating groups arguing for text-based negotiations, including the official submission by the L.69 group of a list of 164 member states who have explicitly supported an early commencement of text-based negotiations. Another significant development was the emergence of a wider Group of Friends of UNSC Reform, who argued for text-based negotiations. Going forward, India will continue to work with like-minded countries including the G-4 and L.69 and others to push for text based negotiations.

Migration

12. The High Level meeting on Large Movements of Migrants and Refugees held in September 2016 at the GA adopted the '**New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants**' a normative document, along with two separate annexes on migrants and refugees respectively. Consultations phase is ongoing leading up to a stock taking phase in November 2017 followed by **inter governmental negotiations** to finalise a 'Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration' in September 2018.

13. India has actively engaged with the consultation process, including with the Special Representative of SG on Migration. India has highlighted the business case for migration that makes human mobility (*professionals, workers, students*) an integral part and requirement of the modern global economy that facilitates and builds upon the mobility of capital and goods. India has also highlighted the well studied economic benefits of migrant workers to the host and sending countries, besides the practical aspects relating to Mode IV under GATS, facilitation of remittances, portability of social security benefits, equivalence of educational qualifications, prevention of abuse of migrants etc.

2030 Agenda & SDGs

14. The adoption in 2015 of the very comprehensive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that incorporates SDGs cutting across all sectors of human activity, has been a major development in the UN system. The 71st session saw the UN Statistical Commission adopt the **Global Indicator Framework on Sustainable Development** to monitor the implementation of the SDGs at its 48th session in March 2017. India is member of Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). The 71st session saw the focus move to **monitoring the implementation of the SDGs** across nations. After 20 member states presented **Voluntary National Reviews** (VNR) of their implementation of the SDGs during the 70th session, 40 more member states (*including India*) followed during the High Level Political Forum of the 71st session. The Indian delegation was led by Vice Chairperson Niti Aayog Dr. Arvind Panagariya and included Secretary Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, and a representative from the state government of Andhra Pradesh. There was significant interest in the presentation of the VNR by India that included the screening of a special documentary. A side event on '*Transforming India: Eradicating Poverty, Promoting Prosperity*' was also hosted by the Mission in association with the Niti Aayog and RIS.

15. At the ECOSOC, the 71st session saw discussions on 2017-2020 **QCPR** (Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review) through which the GA assesses the work of UN development system every four years. India continued to emphasize the primacy of such efforts to focus on inclusive and sustainable growth and poverty eradication. A resolution was adopted in December 2016 that recognizes the eradication of poverty as the 'greatest global challenge' and the highest priority and the underlying objective of the UN Development system. This has been followed by the SG presenting a report on '**Repositioning the UN Development System** (UNDS) to deliver on the 2030 Agenda' acknowledging the need for reform of the system. Consultations with member states are ongoing and a second report is expected in December 2017.

16. In the context of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, India took the lead and became the **first country to contribute** (UN\$ 100,000) **to the UN Tax Trust Fund** that aims to help developing countries actively participate in the discussions on tax issues and support the work of the Tax Committee.

Climate Change

17. **India's ratification of the Paris Agreement** on Gandhi Jayanti and the International Day of Non Violence (2 October 2016) received global attention as it contributed significantly to the Agreement entering into force three days later. India's very ambitious **national climate actions** (*push for solar and wind energy, cess on coal, reforestation etc.*) also continue to attract attention. India's initiative on building an **International Solar Alliance** (ISA), in cooperation with France, has also been widely welcomed. Around 40 countries have already signed up to the initiative. India also deposited its Instrument of Acceptance of the **Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol** (*that covers the second commitment period 2013-2020*) on 8 August 2017.

18. India will participate in the special event being hosted by the Secretary General on Climate Change during the high level segment of the 72nd session of UNGA.

Human Rights & Social Issues

19. India will continue to emphasize that discussions on Human Rights at the UN should be held with a constructive approach. The focus of the Human Rights Council, the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Special Rapporteurs and the entire Treaty Body mechanisms must be to strengthen the capabilities of national governments in their efforts towards promotion and protection of human rights. One of the important developments was the discussion on the **Right to Development** on the sidelines of the General Debate at the beginning of the 71st session (*2016 marked the 30th anniversary of the declaration on RTD*).

20. During the 71st session India constructively engaged in the deliberations on the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the work of UN on issues affecting them. There is a continuing lack of clear definition of Indigenous Peoples.

UN Peacekeeping

21. UN Peacekeeping, the flagship activity of the United Nations, continues to face increasing challenges. India has actively engaged with the deliberations on this issue at the UN. India has also engaged with partners on peacekeeping issues at the 2016 London Ministerial Conference (*that followed the 2015 Leaders Summit*) and the ongoing meetings in the leadup to the next Ministerial Conference in Vancouver in mid-November 2017.

22. There has been significant progress in implementing the **commitments** announced by PM at the 2015 Summit on Peacekeeping. India has pledged contribution of one infantry battalion, one signals company, one engineering company, one Level-II hospital and three formed police units (*one all female FPU*). A Level-II plus hospital has been deployed in UNMISS and the engineering company is in Rapid Deployment Level (RDL) and the other pledges are at Level-2 of the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS).

23. India, as the largest cumulative contributor of troops for UN Peacekeeping has a prominent position among the TCCs and would continue to argue for genuine closer **consultations** between the TCCs and Security Council (*and the Secretariat*). India would continue to stress the importance of adequate **availability of resources** to enable the carrying out of tasks mandated to the peacekeepers. On the issue of allegations regarding sexual exploitation and abuse (**SEA**) by UN personnel, India has

shown commitment to facilitate SG's efforts both for zero tolerance to such incidents and providing help to victims. India has also committed to increase the **proportion of women** among Indian peacekeepers. At a broader level, we will also continue to stress the importance of pursuing **political solutions** and **inclusive development** for building and sustaining peace.

Peacebuilding / Sustaining Peace

24. There is growing recognition of the importance of the concepts of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the UN system, especially since the adoption of identical resolutions in the Security Council and GA in 2016. India will continue to stress the need to focus on the long term development dimension both to prevent conflict and undertake effective peacebuilding efforts to achieve lasting peace and security; enlarged funding for peacebuilding; the need for optimum coordination with other UN organs, especially the Security Council and most of all the need for genuine political will for a long-term commitment and sustained investment among those who can contribute in this regard. India is a contributor to the Peacebuilding Fund.

Counter Terrorism

25. A significant development during 2017 has been the creation of an **Office of Counter Terrorism (OCT)** headed by a new Under Secretary General for Counter Terrorism. India has welcomed the development, which is expected to contribute to the consolidation of the UN work on counter-terrorism and provide greater visibility to the collective threat posed by terrorism.

26. The negotiations on a draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) have not progressed due to continuing serious disagreements on definitional issues.

27. India will continue to push for and support a greater profile to the counter-terrorism activities at the UN; make efforts to decrease differences on outstanding issues on the long-pending draft CCIT; seek greater transparency and effectiveness of the relevant UN Sanctions Committee, and other ways to bring coherence and focus to UN's work on counter-terrorism. India will continue to explore possibilities of facilitating the discussions.

Elections

28. The 72nd session will feature elections to the International Court of Justice, where India's Dr. Dalveer Bhandari, a sitting judge, is among the candidates. India has also declared candidatures for three main UN bodies - Human Rights Council (2019-2021) and the non-permanent seat for the UN Security Council (2021-2022) and re-election to ECOSOC (2018-2020), in addition to some other bodies.

Budgetary and Administrative Issues

30. The **UN regular budget** for the biennium 2016-17 was revised to US\$ 5.6 billion (*from the earlier approved figure of US\$ 5.4 billion*). This includes US\$ 640 million for the 33 Special Political Missions (SPMs) for the year 2017. The budget outline for the forthcoming biennium 2018-19 was approved for US\$ 5.4 billion (*including a provision of US\$ 1.12 billion for SPMs*). For the **UN peacekeeping budget**, an allocation of US\$ 6.8 billion for the year beginning 1 July 2017 has been authorized.

31. India will continue to work as part of the G-77 group to adequately reflect the interests and concerns of the developing countries in the budgetary provisions.

Brief Overview of 71st session

The 71st session of the UNGA witnessed the entry into force of the **Paris Agreement** on Climate Change in October 2016. India's ratification of the Agreement symbolically on 2 October 2016 on Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary and the International Day of Non-violence received wide attention and appreciation.

2. The focus on **implementation of SDGs** became sharper as 40 countries, including India, presented their Voluntary National Reviews at the High Level Political Forum in June 2017. (This year India also presented its third Universal Periodic Review on its implementation of various human rights conventions in Geneva in May 2017).

3. Another high profile event was the **UN Oceans Conference** in June 2017 that focused on the implementation of SDG14. Shri M. J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs **MoS (MJA)** led the Indian delegation at the Conference that adopted a 14-point Call for Action to reaffirm strong commitment to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

4. The General Debate segment of the 71st UNGA opened a day after a High Level event on Large Movements of **Migrants and Refugees**. This was followed by High Level meetings on **AMR** (*anti-microbial resistance*); the **Right to Development**; and the Pledging Conference for the UN **Peacebuilding Fund**. The **UN Habitat III Conference** (*held every 20 years*) was hosted by Colombia in October 2016. India hosted the sixth **Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction** in November 2016 in New Delhi, the first since the adoption of the Sendai Framework in 2015.

India at the 71st Session

5. The Indian delegation to the General Debate of the 71st session was led by the External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj (EAM), who delivered India's statement. MoS(MJA) also attended the general debate for some period.

6. Besides the engagement with the regular UN processes, some other activities during the 71st session included the following :

- i. **India hosted three peacekeeping training courses** at the CUPNK in Delhi in the first half of 2017. These included courses for Senior Mission Leaders; Women Peacekeepers (*in association with UN Women*); and the 2nd Peacekeeping Course for African Partners (*in association with US*).
- ii. **India invited the two co-Chairs of the IGN process on UNSC Reform to visit India**. The visit took place in March 2017 when the co-Chairs also called on the EAM.
- iii. **India provided voluntary financial contribution** of US\$ 1 million each to the newly established **India-UN Development Partnership Fund** and the **IBSA Fund**; US\$ 500,000 for the **UN**

- Peacebuilding Fund**; US\$ 250,000 each to the **PGA Office** and Department of Political Affairs (**DPA for capacity building in electoral processes**), US\$ 100,000 each for SG's Trust Fund for Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (**SEA**), **UN Tax Trust Fund** (*India is the first country to make this contribution*), **UN Trust Fund for Haiti Cholera Response**, and **Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone**.
- iv. **India/Indian candidates were successful in elections** to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (**ITLOS**), International Law Commission (**ILC**), ACABQ, Joint Inspection Unit (**JIU**), **ECOSOC**, Commission on Narcotic Drugs (**CND**) and Committee on Programme and Coordination (**CPC**).
7. In addition to the above, as part of the **outreach activities**, the Mission organized a number of events during this session, which were widely noted and appreciated in the UN system. These included :
- i. **International Day of Yoga events** on 20-21 June 2017 (*a large open-air Yoga session at the UN, a panel discussion on Yoga for Health co-hosted by WHO, and the lighting up of UN building with Yoga postures*).
 - ii. Special panel discussion at the UN on 'Empowering people through digital technologies for social and financial inclusion' on 13 March 2017 to commemorate **Dr. Ambedkar's 126th birth anniversary**, which was widely attended.
 - iii. A special event was held on 2 October 2016 to mark the **International Day of Non Violence** at the UN where India presented its instrument of acceptance of Paris Agreement. A special UN Postal stamp on the legendary Carnatic singer **Dr. M.S. Subbulakshmi** was released and a classical music concert by Mrs. Sudha Ragunathan was also organized to mark the 50th anniversary of her performance at the UN.
 - iv. A special Bharatnatyam recital by UN Women's Advocate for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India Ms. Aishwarya Dhanush was organized at the UN on the occasion of **International Women's Day** on 8 March 2017.
 - v. Special events were also held to mark the **Diwali day** at the UN by lighting up the UN building and co-hosting a musical concert with Trinidad and Tobago, Nepal, Singapore and Guyana at the UN.
 - vi. A special panel discussion was organized in association with Niti Aayog and RIS to showcase the **implementation of SDGs** in India on the sidelines of the High Level Political Forum on June 2017.
 - vii. A special event was hosted by the Mission on 8 June 2017 (World Oceans Day) in association with the UN Office for South South Cooperation to launch the **India-UN Development Partnership Fund**. MoS(MJA) and Minister for Education, Home Affairs and Land Management from Nauru attended the event. The first project (US\$ 1 million) under the Fund is on 'Climate Early Warning Systems' to be implemented in seven Pacific Island states.
 - viii. India partnered the **Afghanistan** delegation on a special event to focus on empowerment of **women in rural areas** in Afghanistan.
 - ix. India hosted a special event to commemorate the **International Day of Peacekeepers** at the UN in May 2017.
 - x. A special talk and discussion was organized at the Mission to mark the **Constitution Day** on 22 November 2016. India also organized the International Law Week at the UN in end October 2016.
 - xi. India participated in an **event** 'Realizing the right to legal capacity of persons with disability' organized by **Bulgaria** on 14 July 2017.

- xii. India participated in an **event** 'Smart Cities: ICT for inclusive urban development' organized by **UAE** on 15 July 2017.
- xiii. India joined hands with Paraguay in hosting the **International Friendship Day** in July 2017 at the UN.
- xiv. A **visit by PRs of 13 countries** to India was organized in August 2017.
- xv. A cultural evening to celebrate **India@70** was organized in early September 2016 that saw a very large attendance.
- xvi. India also partnered several other countries in the events to commemorate the International Day of **Nowruz**, International Day of **Vesak**, and the **Autism Awareness Day**.
- xvii. Mission officials also interacted with groups of students from several universities and colleges and schools based in US, Europe and India.

8. **Secretary General Guterres met Prime Minister** on the sidelines of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2017. **MoS(MJA)** had met Secretary General on the sidelines of G-20 Foreign Ministers Meeting in February. Earlier in the month, **EAM** had a telephone conversation with the Secretary General. Secretary General gave a video message for the **Raisina Dialgue** in January 2017. Earlier, **Foreign Secretary** had met SG-designate in New York in December 2016.