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Statement
by
Hon'ble External Affairs Minister
Mrs. Sushma Swaraj
at the
General Debate of the
71st Session of the
United Nations General Assembly

New York

26 September 2016

Mr. President, Distinguished members of the General Assembly,

1. On behalf of India and on my own behalf, I congratulate you on your election as President of the 71st United Nations General Assembly. Let me also take this opportunity to thank Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for his services to the United Nations, history's largest peace movement.

Mr. President,

2. A year has passed since I stood here at this hallowed podium to address the members of the international community. Since then, much has changed in the world around us – some for the better, some for the worse and much which has been cause of great concern. There can be no better platform to ponder our actions and our achievements over the last year. We must remember that we will be defined not just by our actions, but equally, by our inaction.

Mr. President,

3. A number of issues have been debated in this August Assembly - from the necessity of global partnerships in sharing new vaccines and promoting access to affordable drugs to counter anti-microbial resistance, to the need for faster implementation of the Sendai Framework to mitigate the risk of natural disasters. From the challenge of ensuring well-ordered mobility of productive human resources, to the necessity of adequate consultations with Troop Contributing Countries before framing mandates for UN Peacekeeping Operations. But my time is limited. I would therefore, focus only on some of the most pressing issues facing the international community.

4. The true challenge of our time is to end the curse of harsh poverty that still lurks in so many corners of our world; to ensure that the fruits of growing prosperity reach those who need it most; to take forward the mission of gender equality and protect women where there is gender regression; and to ensure peace across boundaries, not least because there can be no prosperity without peace.

Mr. President,

5. I congratulate you for the priority you have given to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by making them the theme for the 71st UNGA. I am happy that the 17 goals adopted by this Assembly are matched by the development vision of Prime Minister Modi which is geared towards the achievement of these same objectives. Under the Swachh Bharat Mission, more than 400,000 toilets have been constructed in schools. The *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* (Educate the Girl Child, Save the Girl Child) programme has become a nation-wide mission. The Make in India brand is receiving international acclaim. Almost 250 million bank accounts have been opened for the poor under the Jan Dhan Yojana, the largest financial inclusion programme the world has ever seen. Digital India is transforming the country. Under the Skill India initiative, a number of programmes are underway to enable youth to reap the demographic dividend. These initiatives have added a new

dimension to India's growth story, making it the fastest growing major economy in the world at a time of slow global growth.

Mr. President,

6. We are all aware that 1/6th of humanity lives in India. Therefore global success in realizing SDGs depends on the success achieved in India. We are committed to the wholehearted implementation of the Agenda 2030 as a national effort. We have decided to dedicate one day in each session of our Parliament for discussions only on SDGs. This will enable us to constantly monitor their progress and this will give us good results.

7. However, in a globalised world, national effort needs to be supplemented by international cooperation for the successful implementation of Agenda 2030.

Mr. President,

8. Climate change is yet another serious challenge confronting us. There are enough resources on this planet to fulfil everyone's needs, but not enough to fulfil anyone's greed, for greed is limitless. In this context PM Modi has championed a new concept – Climate Justice. If we respect nature, nature will respect and nurture us and future generations. But, if we exploit nature mindlessly, then we must be mindful that nature will unleash its fury upon us. In different parts of the world, we have already seen nature drift towards the unnatural – from torrential rain to excessive heat, from tsunamis to storms and cloudbursts.

9. We must curb reckless consumption, and adopt lifestyles in harmony with nature. Yoga, the storehouse of India's ancient wisdom, epitomises a sustainable lifestyle. Let me record our gratitude for the unprecedented global response to the International Day of Yoga.

10. In the Paris Agreement, the principle of 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities' and 'Respective Capabilities' has been acknowledged and accepted. This makes clear that while our responsibility is common, obligations are different. Developed nations must discharge their responsibility in the search for the common good, with finance and technology transfer.

11. India has launched an ambitious domestic effort to transform our energy mix to achieve 40% energy from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030. The massive investments required entail a predictable and stable environment towards which we are working actively. Apart from this, our path-breaking initiative for an International Solar Alliance is intended to make efficient solar technology available for all.

12. I assure this Assembly that India will continue to play a leading role in combating climate change. We have decided to submit our Instrument of Ratification of the Paris Agreement on October 2, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi who epitomised a lifestyle with the smallest carbon footprint.

Mr. President,

13. Let me now turn to a subject of the most critical importance, one which deeply concerns every member of this Assembly. This month we marked the 15th Anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks on this city. Tragically, less than 15 days ago, another attempt at killing innocents was made through an act of terror in this same city. We, who have suffered in Uri recently, understand the pain inflicted by the same forces. The world has been battling this scourge for long. However, despite the blood and tears of innocent victims, attacks this year alone in Kabul and Dhaka, Istanbul and Mogadishu, Brussels and Bangkok, Paris, Pathankot and Uri as well as daily barbaric tragedies in Syria and Iraq, remind us that these malevolent forces are yet to be defeated.

14. We must acknowledge that terrorism is undoubtedly the biggest violation of human rights. It targets the innocent and kills indiscriminately. Terrorism has gone way beyond affecting individuals or nations – it is a crime against humanity itself. But it is important to ask - who is behind this and who benefits from it? Terrorists do not own banks or weapons factories, so let us ask the real question: who finances these terrorists, who arms them and provides sanctuaries? We heard similar questions being asked by Afghanistan from this podium.

Mr. President,

15. History proves that those who seed extremist ideologies, reap a bitter harvest. The germ of evil has grown into a hydra-headed monster, backed by technological sophistication that threatens the peace and harmony of our world. We will not be able to win against terrorism by making specious distinctions between your problems and mine, between terrorists who attack you and those who attack me. For we do not know who this Frankenstein's monster will devour next.

16. Therefore if we want to defeat terrorism, there is only one way – that we unite across our differences, add steel to our resolve and inject urgency in our response. We need to forget our prejudices and join hands together to script an effective strategy against terror. This is not an impossible task provided we have the will. We can do it, we must do it. Otherwise our future generations will forever hold us to account. And if any nation refuses to join this global strategy, then we must isolate it.

17. In our midst, there are nations that still speak the language of terrorism, that nurture it, peddle it, and export it. To shelter terrorists has become their calling card. We must identify these nations and hold them to account. These nations, in which UN declared terrorists roam freely, lead processions and deliver their poisonous sermons of hate with impunity, are as culpable as the very terrorists they harbour. Such countries should have no place in the comity of nations.

Mr. President,

18. On 21st September, the Prime Minister of Pakistan used this podium to make baseless allegations about human rights violations in my country. I can only say that those

accusing others of human rights violations would do well to introspect and see what egregious abuses they are perpetrating in their own country, including in Balochistan. The brutality against the Baloch people represents the worst form of State oppression.

Mr. President,

19. The Prime Minister of Pakistan also said that India has placed pre-conditions for talks which are not acceptable to him. What pre-conditions? Did we impose any pre-condition before extending an invitation for the oath-taking ceremony of our Government? Did we impose any pre-condition when I went to Islamabad for the Heart of Asia conference and agreed to begin the Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue? Did we impose any pre-condition when Prime Minister Modi travelled from Kabul to Lahore? What pre-conditions? We took the initiative to resolve issues not on the basis of conditions, but on the basis of friendship! We have in fact attempted a paradigm of friendship in the last two years which is without precedent. We conveyed Eid greetings to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, wished success to his cricket team, extended good wishes for his health and well being. Did all this come with pre-conditions attached?

20. And what did we get in return? Pathankot, Bahadur Ali, and Uri. Bahadur Ali is a terrorist in our custody, whose confession is a living proof of Pakistan's complicity in cross-border terror. But when confronted with such evidence, Pakistan remains in denial. It persists in the belief that such attacks will enable it to obtain the territory it covets. My firm advice to Pakistan is: abandon this dream. Let me state unequivocally that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and will always remain so.

Mr. President,

21. As I said at the very beginning, we will be judged by our action and equally by our inaction. What goals have we achieved and what objectives remain unfulfilled? I would like to highlight two such pending tasks of this Assembly.

22. The CCIT was proposed by India in 1996. In 2016, despite the passage of two decades, we are yet to come to a conclusion. As a result, we are unable to develop a norm under which terrorists shall be prosecuted or extradited. Therefore it is my appeal that this General Assembly acts with fresh resolve and urgency to adopt this critical Convention.

23. Just as we need a more contemporary approach to combating terrorism, we also need a less outdated Security Council that continues to reflect the world order of an earlier era. The vast majority of nations share the belief that the UN should not remain frozen in 1945, just to serve the interests of a few. Whether it is institutions or issues, we must come to terms with present day realities and the challenges that confront us. An expansion in the Permanent and non-Permanent membership of the Council to reflect contemporary realities is therefore, an urgent necessity. We must move forward substantively towards text-based negotiations.

Mr. President,

24. If both these long pending issues are addressed during your Presidency, the success of this Session will be ensured.

25. The 21st century has begun in the shadow of turmoil, but we can turn this into a golden age in the history of civilization through united and concerted efforts. But what happens tomorrow will depend on what we do today.

Thank you.
