**​**

**Statement during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of India in the 41st session of the UPR Working Group (7-18 November 2022) delivered by Ms. Indra Mallo, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development**

**[Geneva, 10th November 2022]**

**I now turn to represent the Ministry of Minority Affairs.**

2. The Constitution of India recognises both religious and linguistic minorities and provides for equality before law, equal protection of laws and non-discrimination against any citizen on the basis of only religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

3. ​India is home to almost all religions of the world. Out of India's total approximate population of 1.37 billion in 2022, Muslims constitute 194.54 million, Christians constitute 31.5 million, Sikhs constitute 23.3 million, Buddhists constitute 9.59 million, Jains constitute 5.5 million and Parsis number approximately 58000 of the total population. All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion subject only to public order, morality, health and such other provisions as laid down in the Constitution. Linguistic minorities have the right to conserve their distinct language, script or culture. Minorities enjoy the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

4. ​The National Commission for Minorities has the mandate to protect the constitutional and legal rights of minorities. It evaluates the progress of the development of minorities, monitors the working of the safeguards provided in the Constitution and in laws enacted by the Government and looks into specific complaints.

5. ​The Commission for Linguistic Minorities oversees all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities. In addition, the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutes was established in 2004 and it deals with all matters related with education of minorities.

6. ​A range of legislations have been enacted to protect freedom of religion and punish offences such as promotion of enmity between different groups on ground of religion, committing a deliberate and malicious act to outrage the religious feelings, or acts prejudicial to maintenance of national integration and harmony. Most recently, the Supreme Court of India has directed law enforcement agencies to take immediate suo moto cognizance of “hate speech” and proceed against the offenders in accordance with law.

7. ​The Government has launched a number of initiatives pertaining to education, skill development, access to credit, infrastructural and social development of regions with high concentration of minority populations to ensure the welfare of minorities. Importantly, in all such initiatives, 30% of benefits are earmarked for girls and women.

**I thank you.**