

**Statement during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of India in the 41st session of the UPR Working Group (7-18 November 2022) delivered by Mr. Dhrijesh Kumar Tiwari, Statistical Adviser, Ministry of Women and Child Development**

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

**Mr. President**,

I am Dhrijesh Tiwari, I speak on behalf of the Ministry of Women and Child Development on the issue of Rights of Women.

2. India attaches the highest priority to ensuring safety and security of women and is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and to ensuring their holistic empowerment.

3. The Constitution of India not only provides for equality, but also authorizes the State to take affirmative measures to promote gender equality.

4. India has adopted a multipronged strategy to eradicate gender stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination against women. The measures aimed at bringing about attitudinal change span the domains of law, education and training and include proactive measures in the form of administrative practices, schemes and programmes to overcome specific impediments to gender equality and provide enabling conditions for enjoyment of rights.

5. The Government has administered various special laws for the protection and empowerment of women, such as Domestic Violence Act of 2005, Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2013, Maternity Benefit Act of 2017 and Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 2021. These legislations promote, inter alia, equal participation of women in the workforce, ensure a safe and dignified work environment, and facilitate overall socio-economic empowerment of women. Paid maternity leave for women employees has been increased from 12 weeks to 26 weeks. The right to legal abortion has now been extended from 20 weeks to 24 weeks of pregnancy. The Supreme Court of India in its recent judgment recognized the right to legal abortion for all women, irrespective of their marital status.

6. The Government has also taken various measures for safety, security, and empowerment of women, such as:

* Firstly, one Stop Centres for women in distress and 24 hours helpline that provide emergency police, medical and legal aid, including counselling and shelters
* *Secondly, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* programmehas an exclusive focus on protection and education of the Girl Child to improve child sex ratio and social behaviour change
* Thirdly, Fast Track Special Courts have been set up for speedy disposal of cases of sexual violence against women and children. Anti-Human Trafficking Units in all districts and Women Help Desks at nearly all Police Stations ensure safe and secure environment for women.
* Fourthly, Specialised attention has been given by the Government on empowerment of women. Schemes such as Prime Minister Jan Dhan Yojna promoting financial inclusion, Stand Up India and Mudra Yojna facilitating bank loans and entrepreneurial activities, have resulted in positive outcomes for women which is reflected, among others, in the Gender Wage Gap reduction that now stands at 13%, at par with many developed countries, as per latest ILO estimates.

7. Political representation of women in Parliament has witnessed a rise from 12% in 2014 to 15% in 2022. In Panchayati Raj Institutions which are essentially local bodies at district, block and village level, representation of women is approximately 46% (1.45 million) as against the Constitutional provision of 33% reservation.

8. In addition, the Government regularly conducts awareness programs about various laws relating to women’s rights through workshops, cultural events, seminars, training and advertisements in media.

**I thank you.**