

**Statement during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of India in the 41st session of the UPR Working Group (7-18 November 2022) delivered by Mrs. Yogita Swaroop, Senior Economic Adviser, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**

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

**Mr. President,**

I am Yogita Swaroop, and I am representing the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment,

In line with its commitment to political, social and economic inclusion, India has taken steps to empower the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and is fully committed to their welfare.

2. We have established the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes to provide safeguards against exploitation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and to promote and protect their social, educational, economic and cultural rights and interests.

3. India’s affirmative action programme for the empowerment of vulnerable sections of society is without parallel in its scale and dimension and ensures representation at various levels of decision making such as in legislative bodies, government jobs as well as in educational institutions.

4. The Prevention of Atrocities Act, related to protection of human rights of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as amended in 2016 and 2018, provides for Special Courts for the trial of such offences and the rehabilitation of victims. 193 Special Courts have been established, as of 2022. A National Helpline has also been established to ensure better implementation of these laws and to build awareness.

5. In keeping with the vision of the Government to economically empower the vulnerable and the marginalised sections, the budgetary allocation for their welfare schemes has been increased to about 11.25 billion US Dollars in 2021.

6. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 was enacted to prohibit discrimination against such persons in all spheres of life and to secure for them social security, education and health facilities.

7. In a landmark judgement of 2018, the Supreme Court of India decriminalised adult consensual same sex relations. India was one of the first few Asian countries to do so.

8. Similarly, the Government of India in its endeavour to secure the rights of the elderly persons, formulated a National Policy on Older Persons in 1999, and enacted the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, to ensure financial and food security, health care, equitable share in development, protection against abuse and exploitation and improve the quality of life of the elderly. Also, an amendment bill is under consideration to make the Act more effective.

9. An umbrella scheme called *Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana* was launched in 2021, for elderly care, awareness generation, capacity building, etc. Further, an online portal called SACRED (Senior Able Citizens for Re-Employment in Dignity) was launched in 2021 to keep senior citizens economically independent after retirement.

10. The Prohibition of Manual Scavengers and the Rehabilitation Act, 2013 prohibits employment as manual scavengers and hazardous manual cleaning of sewer and septic tanks. A National Action Plan is under implementation to eliminate manual cleaning of sewer and septic tanks and promote mechanisation of cleaning operations across urban local bodies.

11. For the welfare of Scheduled Tribes, the Government has enacted the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

12. The Government has also invested in skill development programmes for all citizens and has already trained 61.5 million people with special focus on the marginalised and the vulnerable communities.

**I thank you.**