

**STATEMENT BY MR. S.S. AHLUWALIA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
ON FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOME OF THE 27TH SPECIAL
SESSION ON CHILDREN (AGENDA ITEM 43), PROMOTION AND
PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN (AGENDA ITEM 105)
AT THIRD COMMITTEE OF 57TH SESSION OF UNGA ON OCTOBER
15, 2002**

Mr. Chairman,

It is a privilege for me to address the Third Committee on these important agenda items of "Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children" and on the "Follow-up to the outcome of the Special Session on Children."

The United Nations Special Session on Children held in May this year was significant for its review of progress in implementing the commitments made at the World Summit for Children in 1990 and the renewal of important promises to the children of the world. The outcome document 'A World Fit for Children' is a commitment of nations which reflects various pressing issues that affect the well-being of children, such as health, education, environment, HIV/AIDS, measures against the

exploitation of children and their involvement in armed conflict.

In the report of the Secretary General on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, reference is made to the request made by the Commission on Human Rights to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, particularly to Special Representatives and Special Rapporteurs to include a child rights perspective in the fulfilment of their mandates.

Mr. Chairman,

Of the 1.8 billion children (under 15) in the world, an estimated 600 million live in abject poverty. My delegation believes that without addressing the underlying causes of the miserable condition of one-third of the world's children, very little can be achieved. It is not enough

for us to limit ourselves in focussing our attention only on the child rights' perspective. This must, at the same time, be supported by sufficient attention and abundant support to children's developmental needs - first and foremost, adequate and nutritious food, together with civic amenities; secondly, basic health services; and thirdly, access to education.

That tangible progress in promoting and protecting the rights of children can be achieved through this two-pronged strategy is evident from the 'Human Development Balance Sheet' of the UNDP's Human Development Report, 2002. During the 1990s, extreme poverty was halved in East Asia and the Pacific, and fell by 7 percentage points in South Asia. In contrast, the number of people in extreme poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa rose from 242 million to 300 million. The inter-related aspects of poverty, development and rights of children are self evident. How can we expect the rights of children to be protected when the overwhelming concern of day-to-day living in many countries is not rights, but the more basic question of survival, of food for one more day in a situation of extreme and abject poverty ? A

reality check is the need of the day. A better understanding of these underlying inter linkages is required for addressing the important issue of development of children. We call upon UNICEF, UNDP and other funds and programmes and Specialized Agencies to give attention to these aspects in their future studies and include a special focus on this in their future reports. In December, 2001 the General Assembly endorsed the proposal for an in-depth study on the issue of violence against children. This is an important issue. We welcome this proposal and look forward to the study.

Mr. Chairman,

In his report on Protection of Children affected by armed conflict, the Secretary General refers to the research agenda on the impact of armed conflict on children which was initiated and developed by the office of the Special Rapporteur for children and armed conflict. This importance of this aspect cannot be minimized, as the number of children affected, i.e. the number of child soldiers worldwide, is estimated to be 300,000. We welcome the initiatives of the Special Rapporteur and his detailed report.

Mr. Chairman,

India is home to 380 million children, the largest child population in the world. India is committed to the development of every child, and ensuring his or her rights and protection in our country. The Constitution of India pledges that "the State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment". As a follow up to this commitment, Government of India adopted a National Policy for Children in 1974 which reaffirmed the Constitutional provisions. In 1992, a National Plan of Action for Children was adopted to provide a framework for a set of multifarious quantifiable targets. These were expressed in terms of major as well as supporting sectoral goals representing the needs and aspirations of the children of India. The draft National Policy and Charter for Children 2001 provides, *inter alia*, the right to be protected from economic exploitation, and declares that the

State shall move towards the total ban of all forms of child labour. The policy contains provision for the protection of children, particularly the girl child against neglect, maltreatment and various forms of abuse. The Government is presently working towards the establishment of a National Commission for Children for the better protection of child rights and for promoting the best interests of the child within the larger context of promoting and upholding values to strengthen the family, society and the nation.

In their statement on this agenda item on Friday last, the European Union stated "bearing in mind that the realization of the economic, social and cultural rights of children is of crucial importance for their development, poverty eradication must remain at the forefront of our efforts". I would like to emphasize the importance that we attach to this statement and I would like to conclude on a note of hope with a quote from Rabindranath Tagore, poet and Nobel Laureate "Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man".

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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