

Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Third Review and Appraisal of the Madrid
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Country/Organization: INDIA / GOVT. OF INDIA, MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT

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Agenda Item No: 3 Country Statements.

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Country Paper of Government of India for the Third Review and Appraisal of the 2002 Madrid Action Plan on Aging to be held in Bangkok from 12th to 14th September 2017.

Namaskar.

The Government of India, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment conveys its warm and cordial greetings to all the member countries of the UN Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting present here today and to the delegates from these countries.

An ancient Sanskrit scripture says

अभिवादन शीलस्य नित्यं वृद्धोपसेविनः ।

चत्वारि तस्य वर्धन्ते आयुर्विद्या यशो बलम् ॥

abhivAdana shllasya nityaM vRuddhopasevinaH |
chatvAri tasya vardhante AyurvedyA yasho balam ||

For those who are humble and always serve the elderly, four things of life steadily increase: their life span, wisdom, fame and power.

India's care and respect for the elders is rooted in her tradition and culture. Our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji says our elders "...have contributed to both India's Independence as well as its consequent nation building. We are what we are today because of you..."

With a population of 104 million senior citizens as per Census 2011, 8.6% of the total population are elders. But India is also a relatively young country with more than 50 % of the population below 35 years of age. The longevity of population has increased due to advancements in medical research, better quality of life and initiatives of the government. Today 60 is the new young age! The population of senior citizens is expected to reach 173 million by 2026, which will constitute 12.4 % of total population.

For the past several decades, the Government of India has put in place a holistic and integrated framework for the welfare and care for the elderly. The nature of the programmes focus on improving the quality of life of senior citizens through increased financial security, health and nutrition, shelter, protection against abuse and exploitation, an equitable share in the development and affirmative action in favour of senior citizens.

As one of the world's largest democracies with a federal system of government, the responsibility for policy making and its implementation for the elderly is both with the governments at the national and sub-national (states) levels. Our PM, Shri Narendra Modi ji has reaffirmed that "...it is the nation's responsibility to look after you."

Increasingly, in the socio-economic milieu of the South Asian countries, the withering of joint family system has exacerbated the challenges faced by the elderly people, including lack of physical, social, emotional and financial support. To mitigate these challenges to some extent, the Government of India has been implementing various legislations and programmes directly aimed at the welfare of the elderly. Today, India spends over US \$ 30 billion year on year for the welfare and care of the elderly.

The prime key area of Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, is **older persons and their development** which underlines the importance of legislative policy framework, enhancement of technical capacity of stakeholders and adequate financial and human resource investment so that older persons can integrate into the mainstream population.

One of the key initiatives taken by India for this purpose, over the last two years has been the programme of Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana, launched on 1st April, 2017 that will provide, to the poorest of the poor senior citizens, assisted living aids and appliances like wheelchairs, spectacles, walking sticks, dentures etc. This is fully funded by the national government and is expected to improve the quality of life and facilitate reduction of dependency on others. There is also a continuing programme, for the past several decades, of providing for shelter homes for indigent elders under the Integrated Programme for Older Persons.

Nutritional security to senior citizens is equally important and India provides for highly subsidized nutritious food grains to indigent senior citizens.

Our PM, Mr. Narendra Modi ji says, "I am aware of how critical financial security is to a life of comfort and dignity in old age." For **ensuring income security and employment**, a key outcome of this review, India has monthly pension schemes for both indigent senior citizens as also government officials, accident cover and tax benefits exclusively for the elderly.

In May, 2017, our Prime Minister launched the assured senior citizen pension insurance programme, the "Pradhan Mantri Vayavandana Yojana" wherein on payment of an initial lump sum amount ranging from Rs 1,50,000 to Rs 7,50,000 (US \$ 2347 to 11735) , the senior citizen can get an assured pension of Rs 1000 to Rs 5000 per month. Senior citizens are also given tax rebate on health insurance premiums, their medical expenses can be deducted from income and they are also given higher income tax exemptions.

India has also set up an exclusive Senior Citizens Welfare Fund in March 2016 for innovative activities and better financial security and healthcare for the elderly.

Addressing issues of **all form of discrimination**, India has legislated through the Maintenance of Parents and Senior Citizens Act (MWPSA) of 1999. This legislation enables and provides a statutory framework for ensuring that senior citizens are given adequate maintenance support by their children when in times of need. The Police have also been advised to provide adequate security to ensure safety of senior's citizens and take immediate action in addressing concerns of senior citizens, including setting up of dedicated help lines.

The Madrid International Plan of Action for Ageing, 2002 also underlines the importance of ensuring healthy aging at all ages which will enable well being in older age. This is also a draft key outcome in this review. In this regard, India has the National Programme for Health care of the Elderly. Exclusive geriatric centres have been and will be set up at appropriate administrative levels, including setting up of two National Centres of Aging. India also implements a health insurance scheme, the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana that gives additional cover exclusively for senior citizens of indigent families. The coverage under this scheme is Rs 30,000 per senior citizen.

To spread the message of positive aging and to encourage various Institutes and Individuals who have contributed outstandingly for the welfare of senior citizens, India gives National Awards that confer honour and recognition to Senior citizens, Institutions and Individuals.

We are committed to advancing capacity building of the stakeholders and developing manpower who can work effectively with

senior citizens for the quality in delivery of services. The National Institute of Social Defence (NISD) has been conducting such courses for the people who are willing to work as geriatric caregivers and in Institutional settings meant for senior citizens. The Institute is also conducting programmes in schools and colleges to promote Intergenerational Solidarity which will develop harmonious environment in the family and community and meet social needs of the elders. We are willing to associate the NISD in the capacity building for geriatric caregivers and other such trainings for the Asia Pacific community.

With regard to the draft outcome on enabling and supportive environments, India has developed Guidelines for barrier free built environment for persons with disability and senior citizens in buildings, buses, public toilets, airports and other public places. A nationwide "Accessible India Campaign" is being undertaken to achieve these objectives. By-laws for building have been amended to make accessibility mandatory in all buildings. Concessions in basic fare are also offered to Senior citizens for undertaking journey by air and rail.

Moreover, scientific research and data on the issues of senior citizens is also an important component to understand the gaps, develop and improve interventions/policies and legal framework accordingly. Basic data on Senior citizens is collected through the national universal Census and NSSO. A report on "Elderly in India-2016" has been published by the CSO. This details out the statistics on senior citizens in India as per the 2011 census. In 2016, we have also started the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI) which intends to cover more than 60,000 elderly people lasting for 25 years. There will be two main waves during the period 2016-19 and follow up every two years. This study will help in the development of comprehensive national health

policy framework for older persons, expanding the current social security and healthcare programmes.

India has been working in achieving the goals of the Madrid International Plan of Action for Ageing, 2002 and supports the draft outcome proposed. As our Prime Minister says, our Government is, "... committed to ensuring that (the) golden years are spent happily, peacefully and meaningfully and that the senior citizens continue to play an important role in national development."

Thank you.

Namasakar. Jai Hind.