

73rd Session
UN General Assembly
September 2018

BACKGROUND and APPROACH

The setting for 73rd session

The upcoming 73rd session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2018 can be framed by the principal theme of the **UN Secretary General's latest annual report** on the work of the UN that says '**multilateralism** remains as important as ever' against the backdrop of increasing trends of nationalism. UNSG's proposals to reform UN management, development system and peace and security architecture were broadly approved by the UNGA during the 72nd session.

2. A brief overview of the 72nd session and India's engagement during the session is at Annex-I.

Broad International Context

3. Heightened fears about nationalism and protectionism; concerns about climate change and financing of sustainable development goals; ineffectiveness of the Security Council to address the several continuing armed conflicts in West Asia and parts of Africa; refugee crises linked to various conflicts; and the lack of collective international response to the growing number of terrorist attacks across continents present a picture to the challenges faced by multilateralism and the limitations of the current forms of multilateralism and global governance.

4. Progress being achieved in the implementation of 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement, both through national actions and international partnerships are among the more positive aspects of the multilateral discourse.

Brief Overview of 73rd session

5. The **President** of General Assembly (PGA) for the 73rd session, Ms. **Maria Espinosa**, the former Foreign Minister of **Ecuador** and a former PR to the UN, has conveyed that the theme of the for 73rd session will be '**Making the United Nations relevant to all people : Global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies**'.

6. The 73rd **UNGA session** will see the formal adoption of the **Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees**; Political Declarations on fighting **Tuberculosis (TB)** and **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)**; negotiations on a Political Declaration on **Universal Health Coverage**; negotiations on an outcome document for **BAPA+40** (Buenos Aires Programme of Action) on south-south cooperation; negotiations on a proposed **Global Pact on Environment**, besides the ongoing processes on UN Security Council (UNSC) reform; improving UN Peacekeeping; increasing collaboration on Counter Terrorism; and other issues relating to economic, social and human rights.

7. During the High Level segment, in addition to the meetings on TB and NCDs, special events are planned on Climate Change (hosted by UNSG); Global Call on Drugs Problem (hosted by US); One Planet Summit (hosted by France); Action for Peacekeeping (hosted by UNSG) among others.

India's broad Priorities for 73rd session

8. Our main priority issues will include a continuing push for progress on the issue of the **reform of the Security Council**; promoting Indian positions and arguments in the consultations and subsequent inter-governmental negotiations on **Universal Health Coverage** and **BAPA+40 on south-south cooperation**; maintaining India's active engagement on issues relating to **sustainable development and climate change**; bringing India's perspective to the debates relating to **human rights** including the right to development, humanitarian assistance; greater say for Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) in finalizing of mandates for UN **peacekeeping** missions; raising India's profile on **peacebuilding** issues; and greater prominence to issues relating to **counter-terrorism**; listing of select individuals/entities under the 1267 **Sanctions Committee**; and deliberations on the proposed **Global Pact on Environment** (to be pursued in Nairobi).

9. We will actively pursue engagement with fellow developing countries, especially LDCs and SIDS through the **India-UN Development Partnership Fund** established in June 2017 to implement projects to support SDGs in partnership with the UN Office of South-South Cooperation (**UNOSSC**). Mission will also continue engagement with the **IBSA Fund** (India-Brazil-South Africa Fund) for south-south cooperation in association with the UNOSSC.

10. Suitable **outreach activities** will be pursued.

UNGA Issues

11. India continues to be engaged with the range of issues relating to **Security Council reform, development and economic relations, human rights, social and cultural issues, law of the sea, budgetary and UN development system** issues. Focus will grow on implementation of the UNSG's reform proposals that have already been approved but lack sufficient financial resources, especially in case of reform of the UN development system as also on the upcoming negotiations on Universal Health Coverage and BAPA+40 processes. India has continued to project its longstanding and growing credentials as a **south-south development partner**, especially in the context of financing for development and also its commitment to the idea of global partnership under **SDG 17** including on **climate change** (with the International Solar Alliance initiative), while at the same time highlighting the apparent lack of such commitment on the part of some of the traditional donors.

Security Council Reform

12. The inter-governmental negotiation (IGN) process during the 72nd session of the UNGA on the issue of SC reform reflected some further movement building upon the previous round, in the form of a '*Revised Elements of Commonality and Issues for Further Consideration*' as the outcome. The revised paper includes reference to the Common African Position. During the 72nd session, India along with L.69 produced a Handbook on UNSC reforms (*compilation of all official documents over the last 25 years*). Going forward, India will continue to work with the G-4 and L.69 and others to push for text based negotiations.

Migration

13. India was one of the key players at the negotiations on Migration, arguing for a more balanced and nuanced approach to migration, underlining the benefits and challenges of migration, and the importance of human mobility and its business case for today's global economy and the positive aspects of regular legal migration. We rejected any blurring of distinctions between refugee and migrants; regular and illegal migration and pushed for a positive narrative and facilitation of regular migration. We also argued against the document being legally binding and in favour of retaining national autonomy in policy making on all aspects. The agreed text will come for adoption at the Inter-Governmental Conference in Morocco in December 2018 and subsequently in UNGA during the 73rd session.

2030 Agenda & SDGs

14. The adoption in 2015 of the very comprehensive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that incorporates SDGs cutting across all sectors of human activity, has been a major development in the UN system. The 72nd session was the third when a number of countries (43) presented **Voluntary National Reviews (VNR)** of their implementation of the SDGs during the High Level Political Forum of the 72nd session, bringing the total of such countries to over 100. India had presented its VNR during 71st session.

15. In the context of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, India took the lead and became the **first country to contribute (UN\$ 100,000) to the UN Tax Trust Fund** that aims to help developing countries actively participate in the discussions on tax issues and support the work of the Tax Committee. India followed up with another voluntary contribution of US\$ 100,000 during 72nd session.

16. During the 72nd session, the UNGA adopted a resolution in December 2017 to convene an Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) to elaborate an internationally legally binding instrument on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (**BBNJ**) under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The First session of the IGC was held in September 2018. India participated in the IGC. The next rounds of deliberations will be held during the 73rd session. An Indian delegation led by the Surveyor General participated in the 8th session of the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (**GGIM**) during July-August 2018.

17. India actively participated in the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (**CSW**) held in March 2018 and the 51st session of the Commission on Population and Development (**CPD**) held in April 2018.

South-South Cooperation

18. South-South cooperation will move to the centre stage during the 73rd session as the outcome document for the Second UN International Conference on this issue will be convened in Argentina in March 2019. The first such Conference was held in Nairobi in 2009. The negotiations will focus on **BAPA+40** (*forty years after the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action on such issues in 1978*). India will engage actively during the negotiations.

19. Over the past one year, the **India-UN Development Partnership Fund** has expanded significantly (*US\$ 100 million over 10 years and an additional window for Commonwealth countries for US\$ 50 million over 5 years*). We will actively pursue engagement with fellow developing countries, especially LDCs/SIDS through this Fund to implement projects to support SDGs in partnership with the UN Office of South South Cooperation (**UNOSSC**).

20. India has provided a contribution of US\$ 250,000 for the Office of High Representative for LDCs and LLDCs (OHRLLS) for the hosting of the next high level Mid-Term Review of Implementation of Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs in 2019.

Digital Cooperation

21. Issues relating to the transformative and potentially 'disruptive' impact of the ongoing exponential technological change on various spheres of human activity are increasingly finding their way into the multilateral discussions from sustainable development to disarmament, including at the UN. There were several developments on this issue during the 72nd UNGA session and will continue in the next session. The UNSG has set up a 20-member High Level **Panel on Digital Cooperation**, co-chaired by Melinda Gates and Jack Ma. The Panel is expected to present a Report and recommendations in April 2019. In India there are several ongoing instances of use of emerging technologies to scale up transparent and inclusive development efforts.

Climate Change

22. Climate Change continues to be in the spotlight at the UN. The UNSG will host a high level event on Climate Change during the high level week of the upcoming 73rd session. He will also convene a 'Climate Summit' in September 2019 in New York to 'review the Paris Agreement commitments'.

23. India's very ambitious national climate actions continue to attract attention. India's initiative on building an **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**, in cooperation with France, has also been widely welcomed. Nearly 70 countries have already joined the initiative. The 2018 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) Ministerial Declaration welcomes the establishment of ISA.

Global Health Issues

24. During the 72nd session India engaged actively and was among the key players in the negotiations on the finalization of the Political Declarations for adoption during the High Level meetings on **TB** and **NCDs**. India, especially argued strongly for long held G77 positions relating to a balanced approach to promote affordable medicines using TRIPS flexibilities, while recognizing the importance of patents. The two Political Declarations will come up for adoption at the High Level meetings during the 73rd session.

25. During the 73rd session, India will engage in the negotiations on finalization of the Political Declaration for adoption during the first ever High Level meeting on **Universal Health Coverage** due in the 74th session.

Proposed Global Pact on Environment

26. The 72nd session saw discussions on the French proposal to finalise a Global Pact for the Environment. An ad hoc open-ended Working Group (OEWG) was set up by the President of the General Assembly to initiate discussions. Co-chairs of the OEWG convened the organisational session of the process in September 2018 and finalised the timing, number and duration of its substantive sessions. **UNSG will submit a technical Report to the UNGA at its 73rd session.** Substantive deliberations will begin after the submission of this technical report by UNSG to be prepared by Nairobi-based UNEP. This report would be considered by the OEWG in Nairobi at least one month after its submission. The OEWG will make recommendations to the UNGA during the first half of 2019. India will engage actively in the deliberations.

Human Rights & Social Issues

27. India will continue to emphasize that discussions on Human Rights at the UN should be held with a constructive approach. The focus of the Human Rights Council, the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Special Rapporteurs and the entire Treaty Body mechanisms must be to strengthen the capabilities of national governments in their efforts towards promotion and protection of human rights. India had presented its third Universal Periodic Review on its implementation of various human rights conventions in Geneva in May 2017.

UN Peacekeeping

28. UN Peacekeeping, the flagship activity of the United Nations, continues to face increasing challenges. India has actively engaged with the deliberations on this issue at the UN. India has endorsed the **UNSG's initiative on Action for Peacekeeping (A4P)** and supported his reform proposals relating to the UN Secretariat's peace and security architecture. Prime Minister Modi has joined the **UNSG's Circle of Leadership** on preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and India signed the Voluntary Compact on SEA last year. India was the first country to provide US \$ 100,000 for the UNSG's Trust Fund set up in 2016 to in support of Victims of SEA. India also contributed to the Office of the Special Coordinator on improving the UN response to SEA.

29. India has also engaged with partners on peacekeeping issues at the 2017 Ministerial Conference in Vancouver (*that followed the 2016 London Ministerial Conference and the 2015 Leaders Summit*). India made new pledges including 10 military staff officers, 10 UN military observers, a transport company, rapid deployment of infantry battalion, an engineer company and a signal company.

30. India, as the largest cumulative contributor of troops for UN Peacekeeping, has a prominent position among the TCCs and would continue to argue for genuine closer **consultations** between the TCCs and Security Council (*and the Secretariat*) in mandate formulation. India would continue to stress the importance of adequate **availability of adequate resources** to enable the carrying out of tasks mandated to the peacekeepers; the need to remove any caveats and to incentivize female participation and new forms of partnerships among TCCs. On the issue of allegations regarding sexual exploitation and abuse (**SEA**) by UN personnel, India has shown commitment to facilitate SG's efforts both for zero tolerance to such incidents and providing help to victims. India has also committed to increase the **proportion of women** among Indian peacekeepers. At a broader level, we will also continue to stress the importance of pursuing **political solutions** and **inclusive development** for building and sustaining peace.

Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

31. There is growing recognition of the importance of the concepts of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the UN system, especially since the adoption of identical resolutions in the Security Council and GA in 2016. India will continue to stress the need to focus on the long term development dimension both to prevent conflict and undertake effective peacebuilding efforts to achieve lasting peace and security; enlarged funding for peacebuilding; the need for optimum coordination with other UN organs, especially the Security Council and most of all the need for genuine political will for a long-term commitment and sustained investment among those who can contribute in this regard. India has been a contributor to the Peacebuilding Fund.

32. UNSG Guterres, the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), has focused on prevention of conflicts and mediation. The President of the 72nd UNGA convened a High-Level Meeting on this issue in April 2018 that adopted a resolution requesting the UNSG to present an interim report in the 73rd session and a detailed report in the 74th session. A comprehensive review of the peacebuilding architecture is scheduled in 2020.

Counter Terrorism

33. The 72nd session saw negotiations for finalizing the sixth biennial review of the **Global Counter Terrorism Strategy** (GCTS). This was the first such review following the establishment of the Office of Counter Terrorism (OCT) last year by the UNSG to streamline the UN Secretariat efforts to coordinate CT efforts and raise the profile of such work. India announced a contribution of US\$ 550,000 to support the work of OCT in June 2018. The GCTS resolution was adopted in the lead-up to the **first-ever UN High Level Conference of Heads of Counter Terrorism Agencies** in end-June 2018. The Indian delegation at the Conference was led by Special Secretary (Internal Security) MHA. Earlier India participated in the 16th meeting of the Advisory Board of the UN Centre for Counter Terrorism (UNCCT) in Riyadh in April 2018.

34. The negotiations on a draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) have not progressed due to continuing serious disagreements on definitional issues.

35. India will continue to push for and support a greater profile to the counter-terrorism activities at the UN; make efforts to decrease differences on outstanding issues on the long-pending draft CCIT; seek greater transparency and effectiveness of the relevant UN Sanctions Committee, and other ways to bring coherence and focus to UN's work on counter-terrorism. India will continue to explore possibilities of facilitating the discussions.

Elections

36. The 72nd session saw Dr. Dalveer Bhandari, a sitting Judge at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the Indian candidate, being re-elected to the ICJ, the principal UN judicial organ. The elections to the ICJ are conducted simultaneously in the UNGA and the Security Council. During the 72nd session, India was also elected to several ECOSOC subsidiary bodies. These included the Committee on NGOs, a subsidiary body of the ECOSOC for the term 2019-2022 by securing the highest number of votes by any candidate in the Asia Pacific Group. India was also elected the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ); the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS and UN Women, all for the

term 2019-2021; the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) and the Commission for Social Development (CSoCD) both for the term commencing from date of election to 2021.

37. During the 73rd session, election to the Human Rights Council (HRC) for the term 2019-2021 will take place in October 2018, where India is a candidate. India has also announced the candidature of Ms. Jagjit Pavadia for re-election to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), elections for which will take place in April 2019. India also plans to nominate a candidate to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), elections for which will be held in June 2019. India has also declared candidature for a non-Permanent member seat of the UN Security Council for the term 2021-2022, elections for which will take place in June 2020.

Budgetary and Administrative Issues

38. The 72nd session approved the figures for the biennial UN Regular budget (2018-2019) and the annual UN Peacekeeping budget (July 2018-June 2019). The **UN regular budget** for the biennium 2018-2019 was approved as US\$ 5.4 billion. This includes a provision of around US\$ 1.12 billion for 34 Special Political Missions (SPMs). SPMs are mandated by the UNSC and UNGA and funded through regular budget (unlike the peacekeeping missions mandated by the UNSC). This is 5% lower than the revised final approved figure of around US\$ 5.7 billion for the period 2016-17. With the approved management reforms, the budgeting will now be done annually starting with 2020. The annual **UN peacekeeping budget** for the period July 2018-June 2019 was approved as US\$ 6.7 billion. This is marginally lower than the initially approved figure of US\$ 6.8 billion for July 2017-June 2018. The approved budget of for the year July 2016-June 2017 was US\$ 7.87 billion reflecting closure/downsizing of some peacekeeping missions over the last couple of years (Liberia, Ivory Coast and Haiti). The upcoming 73rd session will feature a discussion on revision of scales of assessment.

39. We will continue to work as part of the G-77 group to adequately reflect the interests and concerns of the developing countries in the budgetary provisions.

Brief Overview of 72nd session

40. The 72nd session was the first session for the UNSG Antonio Guterres.

41. The proposals made by the UNSG for UN reforms; intergovernmental negotiations to finalise a Global Compact on Migration; and Political Declarations on Tuberculosis and Non Communicable Diseases; progress being achieved in the implementation of SDGs and Paris Agreement; and the discussions on financing for development and south-south cooperation the deliberations on the challenges faced by peacekeeping and the growing recognition of the importance of sustaining peace; in addition to the deliberations on the reform of Security Council and revitalization of the General Assembly, are some of the issues that will figure prominently in the upcoming session. During the High Level segment, special events are planned on Climate Action (hosted by SG); UN Reform (hosted by US); a Global Compact on Environment (proposed by France); action against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) – hosted by SG among others.

India at the 72nd session

42. The Indian delegation to the General Debate of the 72nd session was led by the External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj (EAM) who delivered India's statement. MoS(MJA) also attended the general debate.

43. India attended the UNSG special event on Climate Action and the French President's event on the proposed Global Compact on Environment. India also attended the US President's event on UNSG reform proposals.

44. Prime Minister Modi joined the UNSG's Circle of Leaders against the Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in peacekeeping. India also signed the Voluntary Compact with the UNSG on SEA.

45. MoS(IC) Housing and Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Puri, in his capacity as the President of the Governing Council of UN HABITAT, participated in the HLPF (High Level Political Forum) discussions on SDG11 on Sustainable Cities in June 2018.

46. Besides the engagement with the regular UN processes, some other activities during the 72nd session included :

- i. **India hosted two peacekeeping training courses** at the Center for UN Peacekeeping (CUPNK) in Delhi in the first half of 2018. These included the Third UN Peacekeeping Course for African Partners (UNPCAP) in May 2018 (*in association with US*) and a Female Military Officers' Course (FMOC) on the 'Integrated Programme on Mainstream Agenda in UN Peacekeeping to end Conflict-Related Sexual Violence' in February 2018 in partnership with UN Women.
- ii. **India invited PGA-elect** for the 73rd session, Ms. Maria Espinosa, the former Foreign Minister of Ecuador to visit India. The visit, at the invitation of EAM, took place in August 2017. During the visit, PGA-elect called on PM and met EAM. India has provided a financial contribution of US\$ 250,000 to the Trust Fund for the Office of the PGA like last year.
- iii. **India invited the two co-Chairs of the IGN process on UNSC Reform to visit India.** The visit took place in January 2018 when the co-Chairs also called on the EAM.
- iv. The UN Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations (**USG DPKO**) Jean-Pierre Lacroix **visited India in June 2018.**
- v. **India has committed US\$ 150 million for the India-UN Development Partnership Fund** for a period of 10 years; India provided US\$ 1 million to the **IBSA Fund; Solar project at UN HQ;** US\$ 0.55 million for the Office of Counter Terrorism; US\$ 250,000 each to the **PGA Office, OHRLLS,** and **Joint Office for select Commonwealth countries;** US\$ 100,000 each for **UN Tax Cooperation Trust Fund, UN Democracy Fund, UN Academic Impact, Peacekeeping project on Conduct & Discipline for SEA; US\$ 50,000 for UN Youth Envoy;** and **Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone.**
- vi. Two groups of PRs based in New York visited India at our invitation for study tours in February and August 2018.

- vii. Mission led the negotiations for finalizing the draft outcome document for the Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in March 2018. The Special Envoy of the French President Ms. Segolene Royal was present during the finalization.
- viii. The **International Solar Alliance Framework Agreement** that entered into force December 2017 has since been registered as an International Treaty with the Legal Division of the UN Secretariat in accordance with Article 102 of the UN Charter on 9 February 2018. India's Instrument of Ratification of the 2013 **Minamata Convention on Mercury** that entered into force in August 2017 was deposited with the Legal Division of the UN Secretariat on 18 June 2018. India's Instrument of Accession to the 2012 **Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products** (to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control) was deposited with the Legal Division of the UN Secretariat on 5 June 2018. The Protocol enters into force on 25 September 2018.

47. In addition to the above, as part of the outreach activities, the Mission organized a number of events during the 72nd session, which were widely noted and appreciated in the UN system. These included :

- i. **International Day of Yoga events** on 20-21 June 2018
Large open-air Yoga session at the UN
Panel discussion on Yoga for Peace
Lighting up of UN building with Yoga postures
Exhibition on Yoga
- ii. **International Day of Non Violence** on 2 October 2017
Panel discussion on 'Significance of Non Violence in Today's World' at UN
Panel discussion (co-hosted with CGI) at Columbia University, alma mater of Dr. Ambedkar
- iii. Commemoration of One Year of **India-UN Development Partnership Fund** on 8 June 2018
Panel discussion where UNSG, UNDP, UNOSSC heads, other UN agencies and around 40 PRs were present
- iv. **Dr. Ambedkar's 127th birth anniversary** 13 March 2018
Panel discussion at UN
Panel discussion (co-hosted with CGI) at Columbia University, alma mater of Dr. Ambedkar
- v. Special event to commemorate the **International Day of Peacekeepers** at the UN in May 2018
- vi. Special event on '**Water, Sanitation and Women's Empowerment**' in March 2018
- vii. Special event on 'Jaipur Foot' in May 2018
- viii. Partnered Afghanistan, Norway on a special event on '**Empowering Rural Women**' (CSW session) in March 2018
- ix. India also partnered several other countries in the events to commemorate the International Day of **Nowruz**, International Day of **Vesak**, **Diwali**, **World Toilet Day** and the **Autism Awareness Day**.
- x. Mission hosted a large **India@70** Reception in September 2017.
- xi. Mission officials also interacted with groups of students from several universities and colleges and schools based in US, Europe and India.