Mr. President,

At the outset, permit me to extend my warm felicitations to you on your assumption of the important post of President of the 66th session of the UN General Assembly. You can count on the full cooperation and constructive support of my delegation as you steer our work over the next year.

Mr. President,

Less than a week has passed since our leaders assembled here in this very same hall to share their perspective and vision on the current international system.

Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, addressed this august assembly on 24 September, 2011 and spelled out some of the daunting challenges confronting the international community in this time of flux and uncertainty.

Mr. President,

Terrorism is a scourge of humanity. It is a global problem that requires global solutions. It has spared no country or region in the world, be it New York, London, Abuja, or Mumbai, to name but a few places.

I am happy that the Counter Terrorism Committee of the Security Council, which India has the honour of chairing, adopted an outcome document on the 10th
Anniversary of Resolution 1373 which contains the two consensus benchmarks, namely that the international community has zero tolerance towards terrorism, and no cause or grievance, whatsoever, can justify it.

India believes that the adoption of the Comprehensive Convention against International Terrorism would provide a solid legal basis for the fight against terrorism. In our view, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is incomplete in the absence of such a Comprehensive Convention.

Mr. President,

On the important issue of reforming the Security Council, the negotiations during the 65th session have demonstrated, without a shred of doubt, the strong support extended by the membership for expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of Security Council.

We welcome the decision of the President of the General Assembly to re-appoint Ambassador Zahir Tanin as the Chair of the intergovernmental negotiations. We urge Ambassador Tanin to immediately convene an informal plenary meeting to discuss Council reform.

Mr. President,

Last year, the United Nations played a significant role in helping the people of South Sudan realize their aspirations. It was with a sense of accomplishment that India along with the rest of the international community welcomed the new country into our fold. The path ahead is by no means easy, but we are confident that we can, with adequate resolve, patience, and perseverance help the new-born nation as it embarks on the task of nation-building.

This year, we have another opportunity to transform the dreams of the Palestinian people into reality. As Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said to this Assembly on 24th September, “We look forward to welcoming Palestine as an equal member of the United Nations.”

Mr. President,

The population of our planet is set to cross the 7 billion mark this month. This is not a mere statistical milestone but is a reminder once again of the grinding poverty, inequality and deprivation that continue to be the fate for an unacceptably large cross-section of humanity. It also shines a spotlight on the many unfinished tasks ahead of us in the global development agenda.

Since the global community met in New York in September 2010 to review the progress on MDGs, we have registered some advances, though overall the picture is mixed. The high political commitment notwithstanding, the hard truth is that countries have done little to shore up Global Partnership- MDG 8. In this regard, the
commitment made by developed countries of 0.7% of GNI ODA ought to be fulfilled at the earliest. Equally significant is the need for ensuring access to technology in an affordable manner and building capacity.

Poverty reduction, gender empowerment, maternal health and infant mortality figures continue to show variable trends with marked disparities between regions. Acute rural-urban divide in all the indicators make the progress lopsided. What is most worrisome is that despite significant reductions in extreme poverty in the developing world, the proportion of people who go hungry has remained static. This glaring disconnect calls for renewed attention to the mechanisms governing access to food in the developing world.

Mr. President,

We believe that it is important for the UN system to focus on the needs of the most vulnerable populations in developing countries. Sustained priority must be given to the special needs of the LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDs. Member-states and the UN system need to ensure timely action on the Istanbul commitments. We must also pay particular attention to Africa in recognition of its special needs.

The focus on women’s issues in the UN system received a substantial boost through the transformative step member-states took last year in creating a unified gender entity - UN WOMEN. We are happy to note that the new entity has embarked on its important tasks with purpose and vigour even as it settles into its new structures and mandate.

Mr. President,

My delegation’s efforts at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will be to ensure that the negotiations move forward expeditiously leading to an ambitious, balanced and fair outcome. While doing so, we ought to be mindful that the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility, and respective capabilities must be its defining features.

I also draw your attention to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro next year which holds strong promise for the global sustainable development agenda. We must seize the opportunity to bring back sustainable development, as defined by the Rio Principles, to the centre of the global development matrix.

Mr. President,

We appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General in advocating the principles of promotion and protection of human rights, and the rule of law. We also recognize their synergistic link with human welfare and socio-economic development, including the achievement of the MDGs.
The review of the Human Rights Council last year was a welcome development.

Mr. President,

Peacekeeping constitutes the most visible enterprise of the United Nations. India has had the proud privilege of contributing more than 100,000 peacekeepers to peacekeeping operations in the past six decades. As one of the largest troop and resource contributors, India is acutely conscious of the dramatic changes in the peacekeeping landscape.

We remain supportive of all efforts by the Secretary-General to strengthen the capability of peacekeepers to keep peace in increasingly difficult and complex situations by taking into account changed realities. It is imperative to ensure that any decision on peacekeeping mandates does not get isolated from the equally important decisions on resources and capacity to ensure satisfactory execution of such mandates.

Equally, India is conscious that peacekeeping cannot be a substitute for the task of nation-building and peace building. The Government of India is committed to the principle and practice of peace building.

Mr. President,

India attaches the highest priority to the goal of universal disarmament. We continue to be guided by the visionary action plan for a Nuclear- Weapons-Free and Non Violent World presented by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1988 and which sets out a road map for achieving nuclear disarmament in a time-bound, universal, non-discriminatory, phased and verifiable manner.

We further welcome the attention given to the issue of ‘Nuclear Safety and Security’. We support international efforts under the aegis of the International Atomic Energy Agency to enhance levels of safety and security.

In closing, Mr. President, we look forward to forging ahead on the crucial issues before us in the current session of the General Assembly and working towards meaningful and result-oriented outcomes.

I thank you.