

STATEMENT MADE BY INDIA ON THEMATIC ISSUES, MIGRATION, GENDER, SAND AND DUST STORM AT COP15 UNCCD

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Degradation - GHGs, Ozone Depletion and Climate Change

Following is the statement made by India on thematic issues-Migration, Gender, Sand and Dust storms at the 15th Session of the Conference of Parties of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Cote d'Ivoire, today:

Migration

Desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) act as one of the drivers that cause migration. Other factors include climate and environmental changes. Promotion of sustainable agriculture and its associated value chains offer promising avenues to stop out-migration of rural population. Linking urban-rural communities and developmental actions to addresses migration was insisted in decision 22/COP.14. ICCD/COP(15)/18 concludes that in rural areas affected by DLDD, livelihood opportunities through land restoration activities should be ensured. Integrated land-use planning together with enhancing green and blue infrastructure for sustainable development should be prioritised. A stronger symbiotic urban-rural linkage targeting vulnerable groups that include women, rural youth, refugees, and internally displaced person be provided with on-farm and off-farm employment. Youth are most likely to face migration and engaging youth is vital to restoration efforts for resilient and sustainable food systems. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner under Ministry of Home Affairs is the designated authority in India that compiles information on migration based on the data compiled during national census that usually takes place at a gap of ten years' time interval.

Reducing the extent of human migration is one of the pronounced achievements of watershed development programmes being implemented by Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India. About 60% of the amount spent in each watershed goes for labour component which generates substantial employment for the local landless, small and marginal farming community people. Use of machinery in watershed activities is kept to the minimum so that employment opportunities are kept intact which minimize human migration from the watershed project areas. Convergence with MGNREGS and other related schemes is an added advantage for watershed programmes to generate employment and minimize migration.

Watershed Development Component – Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (WDC-PMKSY) has generated more than 37.73 Million man-days of employment which also contributed to the reduction in migration in the treated areas, especially, during pandemic period. It has further acted as an enabler of reverse migration, when labour force was reverted to their native places and engaged with the watershed workforce.

Gender

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, Plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of

women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels.

The goal of National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001 is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

Empowerment of women is an integral part of PMKSY in India. Representation of women has been envisioned in the Watershed Committees involved in planning, implementation and maintenance of watershed interventions. Women-based community organizations such as Self-Help Groups, User Groups and farmer producer organizations are formed and nurtured while implementing the watershed programs.

The issues pertaining to gender in India is addressed by two ministries, namely, Ministry of Women and Child Development, and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Gender equality is also a major sustainable development goal (SDG 5). In this context, India had proposed its National Action Plan to improve statistics on gender.

The SDG-5 and the basic premise for considering gender as a thematic area is directed towards phasing out gender discrimination from all sectors. The Government of India has taken steps to address this issue at the most fundamental level through the “**Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao**”. The scheme allows a girl child to be self-sustainable with regard to her own education. To increase participation of women in scientific innovation, the Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI) programme has been initiated by the Department of Science Technology, Government of India.

Decision 12/COP.14 emphasized on raising awareness amongst women with regard to land degradation. With respect to this, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has been conducting knowledge exchange programs with women farmers residing in drought-prone areas. However, as far as SDG-5 is concerned, there is scope for ample progress to be made especially in the areas of women participation in labour.

Sand and Dust storms

Sand and dust storms (in short SDS) are of common occurrence in arid and semi-arid regions both in Asia and Africa and affects 11 of the 17 SDGs. SDS adversely impact environment and quality of life. India highly appreciates that United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is supporting regional cooperation for issues related to SDS.

Decision 25/COP(14) requested UNCCD to finalise and publish Sand and Dust Storms Compendium to provide information and guidance on assessing and addressing the risks related to SDS.

India acknowledges and fully supports that the UNCCD secretariat has been assisting countries in regional planning and policy framework on combating SDS. Several pilot projects were implemented in central and northeast Asia including China, Korea and Russia to formulate national SDS plans.

In India, work on monitoring of SDS is primarily done by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD).

ICCD/COP(15)/16, para 23 highlights about major gaps in monitoring, risk assessment, impact assessment and emergency response measures while addressing issues related to the SDS.

Anthropogenic SDS source mitigation is lacking in most of the countries and there is a lack of required data and information to address SDS related issues.

Capacity building of parties to address SDS through SDS toolbox and decision support system was envisaged. The first SDS Toolbox will be made available by mid-2022. Usually, these Toolbox provide methodology to integrate available information in a scientific way to address envisaged problems at a coarser scale.

India can designate appropriate remote sensing agency (such as SAC/ NRSC) to develop GIS layers at finer scale to integrate indicator layers to test its applicability on ground for further improvement. This would address the issues in a more pragmatic way.

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