



ADDRESS BY  
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FOR THE HINDI LAUNCH OF  
WOMEN IN INDIA:  
HOW FREE? HOW EQUAL?

ON 8 MAY 2002  
FOR STATE LEGISLATORS OF  
CHHATISGARH.

- GOOD MORNING.
- HONOURABLE CHIEF GUEST, SHRI AJIT JOGI, MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND CHILD, SMT. GEETA DEVI,
  - SPEAKER SHRI RAJENDRA SHUKLA AND DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE STATE ASSEMBLY,
  - FRIENDS ALL!
- LET ME ON BEHALF OF ALL OF US OF THE UN FAMILY IN INDIA, THANK THE GOVERNMENT OF CHHATTISGARH FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH YOU.
- WE'RE HERE WITH OUR COLLEAGUES FROM UNIFEM, THAT'S THE UN DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN TO PRESENT TO YOU THIS REPORT ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA, COMMISSIONED BY THE UN SYSTEM.
  - THIS REPORT HAS BEEN NOW TRANSLATED INTO HINDI FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR PARTNERS IN THE NORTHERN STATES.
- IT GIVES US GREAT PLEASURE ESPECIALLY TO BE ABLE TO LAUNCH IT HERE IN CHHATISGARH, ONE OF THE NEWEST STATES IN INDIA, LOOKING TOWARDS A GREAT FUTURE –
  - YOUR COMMITMENT TO ENSURING THAT ECONOMIC PROGRESS GOES HAND IN HAND WITH STRIDES IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER ADVANCEMENT IS TREND- SETTING.
  - 'DIDI BANK' AND 'INDIRA SOOCHNA SHAKTI' PROGRAMMES INITIATED BY GOVERNMENT OF CHHATISGARH ARE BRILLIANT EXAMPLES
- RECENTLY ON UNITED NATIONS DAY, THE UN SYSTEM IN INDIA USED A SLOGAN – WOMEN HOLD UP HALF THE SKY!
- WE HOPE THAT BASED ON THIS UNDERSTANDING, GOVERNMENT AND POLICY-MAKERS CAN ISSUES OF PRIORITY TO WOMEN, AT LEAST HALF THEIR ATTENTION.
  - AND THAT IS WHAT THIS SESSION IS ALL ABOUT!
- WE ARE GREATLY ENCOURAGED BY THE COMMITMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT AT EVERY LEVEL --- THE POLICY FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT ANNOUNCED AND THE YEAR 2001 CELEBRATED AS THE YEAR FOR WOMENS EMPOWERMENT WERE CERTAINLY GLOBAL MODELS.
- MAY WE CONGRATULATE THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILD HERE IN CHHATTISSGARH, FOR TAKING STEPS TO PROACTIVELY ENGAGE WITH THE ISSUE OF GENDER EQUITY, THROUGH THE

UPCOMING WOMENS COMPONENT PLAN AND DISCUSSIONS ON GENDER BUDGETING.

- AS THE UN SYSTEM IN INDIA, ONE OF THE OVERARCHING CROSS CUTTING THEMES IN OUR MISSION IDENTIFIED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA FOR ITS UN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FRAMEWORK IS - **TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY**, - AND HAND IN HAND WITH THIS IS OUR FOCUS ON **STRENGTHENING DECENTRALISATION**.
- BOTH THE THEMES ARE INDIVISABLY INTERLINKED - BY PROMOTING THE PROFILE, ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING, WE AUTOMATICALLY PROMOTE THE CAUSE OF GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY ---
  - ENSURING THAT THE GIRL CHILD, ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN INDEED HAVE A CHANCE TO INDEED HOLD UP HALF THE SKY ALONG WITH THE MEN.
- AND THIS IS WHY WE ARE HERE, TO DIALOGUE WITH YOU ON THE CONCEPT OF GENDER EQUALITY, TO EXPLORE WAYS TO INTEGRATE GENDER CONCERNS AND PRIORITIES IN DECISION - MAKING AND TO SEE HOW YOU, THE LEADERS AND POLICYMAKERS, TOGETHER WITH CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERS, NGOs AND THE MEDIA CAN SHOW THE WAY IN IMPROVING THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND BRINGING WOMEN TO THE FORE-FRONT.
- HOW CAN MORE WOMEN PARTICIPATE IN POLICY AND DECISIONMAKING?
  - HOW CAN POLICIES BE MORE GENDER EQUITABLE?
- AS LEGISLATORS AT THE STATE LEVEL YOU HAVE TREMENDOUS POWERS AND POSSIBILITIES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY AND ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING.
  - PARTICULARLY WITH JURISDICTION OVER LAND RIGHTS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AGRICULTURE, WATER, PUBLIC HEALTH AND SANITATION COMMUNICATIONS, PRISONS AND VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION.
  - THESE ARE CENTRAL ISSUES FOR WOMEN'S ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES AND EMPOWERMENT –
  - FOR ALL THESE SECTORS TO REACH WOMEN WITH A REAL BENEFIT, IT'S ESSENTIAL THAT A PROACTIVE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IS TRANSLATED INTO GENDER SENSITIVE INITIATIVES IN THESE AREAS.
  - WE SHOULD BE LOOKING AT POLICIES IN ALL THESE AREAS FROM THE WOMEN'S POINT OF VIEW.
  - WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS ARE A KEY AREA OF CONCERN.
  - IN EDUCATION, HEALTH AND SANITATION THE CONNECTIONS ARE MORE OBVIOUS —

- YET ARE WE LOOKING AT COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH WOMENS EYES?
  - DO VILLAGE ROADS LEAD TO THE HEALTH CENTER?
  - IS ROAD TRANSPORT SAFE FROM HER PERSPECTIVE?
- WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISIONMAKING AT ALL LEVELS, ESPECIALLY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS A CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT.
  - THE RESULTS OF WOMEN'S ROLE IN PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE CAN RECEIVE A GREAT BOOST FROM YOUR ENCOURAGEMENT.
- OUR EFFORTS IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY UNDER THE UN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FRAMEWORK INCLUDE SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT IN ENGENDERING THE ANNUAL ECONOMIC SURVEY- SINCE LAST YEAR THE SURVEY HAS CARRIED A SECTION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY, AND THE CHALLENGES THAT INDIA FACES IN IMPROVING THEIR STATUS.
  - ANOTHER SATISFYING OUTCOME HAS BEEN OUR EFFORTS TO ENGENDER THE CENSUS OF INDIA- ALREADY WE CAN SEE AN IMPROVED FEMALE WORK PARTICIPATION RATE.
  - THIS HAS GIVEN VISIBILITY TO THE UNCOUNTED, TO UNSEEN WORK, TO THE TREMENDOUS CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO THE ECONOMY AND FAMILY.
  - THIS FOCUS CAN BE WIDENED AND EXPANDED TO EMPHASISE THE PIVOTAL CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.
  - THROUGH EFFORTS TO IMPROVE SOCIAL SECTOR ALLOCATIONS AND INTERVENTIONS THAT MAINSTREAM THE ROLE OF WOMEN, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FACILITATE THE PROCESS OF BRINGING THE VOICES OF WOMEN AT THE GRASS-ROOTS TO THE UPCOMING TENTH PLAN OF INDIA.
  - THE APPROACH PAPER TO THE PLAN ITSELF, NOW INCLUDES REFERENCES TO THE NEED FOR SOCIAL PROVISIONING AND SOCIAL SAFETY NETS FOR WOMEN, INCLUDING TARGETS FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO BE MET FOR GENDER ADVANCEMENT.
- EFFORTS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AT EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT ARE CRITICAL FOR MEETING GLOBAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS.
- LEADERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD GATHERED FOR THE MILLLENIUM SUMMIT IN 2000, AND JOINTLY AGREED ON A SET OF GOALS THAT WOULD NEED BE MET TO IMPROVE THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STATUS AND EXPAND CHOICES FOR THE POOREST IN THE WORLD.

- ONE MILLENIUM GOAL IS DEVOTED EXCLUSIVELY TO PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY, WHILE AT LEAST TWO OUT OF THE REMAINING SEVEN HAVE A SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO WOMEN OR THE GIRL CHILD.
- WITH ONE SIXTH OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION AND THE DECISIVE IMPORTANCE OF INDIA IN THE GLOBAL FORA AND INDEED THE UNITED NATIONS, INDIA CAN BE THE PLACE WHERE THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES WILL BE CONFRONTED AND WON, AND WE ARE PROUD TO BE PARTNERS IN THAT ENDEAVOUR.
- WE HOPE THAT WE CAN PARAPHRASE THAT EVOCATIVE PHRASE OF MAHATMA GANDHI, AND "RECALL THE FACE OF THE POOREST AND THE WEAKEST WOMAN WHOM YOU HAVE SEEN AND ASK YOURSELF IF THE STEP YOU CONTEMPLATE IS GOING TO BE OF ANY USE TO HER.
- WILL SHE GAIN ANYTHING BY IT? WILL IT RESTORE HER TO A CONTROL OVER HER OWN LIFE AND DESTINY?".
- THANK YOU.