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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

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**P. C. CHATURVEDI SECRETARY OF LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT ADDRESSES THE
100TH SESSION OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE ON REPORT OF
ILO DIRECTOR GENERAL-“EQUALITY AT WORK: THE CONTINUING
CHALLENGE”**

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“Millions of people suffer from discrimination in the world of work which not only violates a basic human right but has wider social and economic consequences. Discrimination stifles opportunities wasting the human talent needed for economic progress and accentuates social tensions and inequalities. Combating discrimination is an essential part of promoting Decent Work, and success on this front is felt well beyond the workplace.” Shri Prabhat C. Chaturvedi, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment said this while speaking at the 100th session of the International Labour Conference on Friday 10th June, 2011 at Geneva.

Shri Chaturvedi stated that discrimination on various grounds can be exacerbated in times of economic uncertainty. Whatever has been the social impact of the financial crisis, post-crisis recovery strategies and measures must not ignore the principles of non-discrimination and equality.

Shri Chaturvedi further stated that Government of India has ratified the Conventions on Equal Remuneration (C-100) and Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) C-111. To ensure the enforcement of ILO Convention No. 100 concerning Equal Remuneration to men and women for work of equal value, the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 was enacted. The Constitution of India guarantees Civil Liberties which include individual rights common to most liberal democracies. Article 15 of the Constitution of India prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste sex or place of birth and Article 16 states that there shall be Equality of Opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.

He further added that the Right against Exploitation is also a fundamental right in our Constitution aimed to prevent exploitation of weaker sections of society. The Bonded Labour Abolition Act, 1976 has been enacted by Parliament to bring an end to this practice. The prevention of sexual harassment of women at the workplace also has the force of law under Article 141 of the Constitution of India. The practice of untouchability has been declared an offence punishable by law in India and Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 has been enacted by Parliament of India.

Shri Chaturvedi mentioned that Government of India attaches utmost priority to the welfare and development of the weaker sections of society. The structure and mechanism of implementation of protection of Civil Rights Act, 1954 and the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 include provision for legal aid to affected persons, setting up of special course, vigilance and monitoring

committees under Chief Minister and District Magistrate respectively. SC/ST candidate have been given reservation in professional courses like medical, engineering colleges in India and also have been providing reservation for jobs in the Civil Services of the country in order to encourage their participation in the economic and political mainstream of the country. Government of India reserves 50 per cent of seats in Central Institute of Higher Education for economically and socially backward candidates.

Shri Chaturvedi stated that Indian law provides a quota system, where by a percentage of seats are reserved in employment in Government and in the Public Sector Units (PSU) and in all public and private educational institution. The reservation policy is also extended to SC/ST for representation in Parliament of India. A reservation of 3% seats is given to physically challenged persons in Government jobs.

He further stated that Government of India is following a policy of positive discrimination by reserving a part of benefits under Flagship Welfare Programme like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Local Self Government (Panchayat), Municipalities and Vocational Training Institute exclusively for women. We have introduced legislation to assure minimum wages, maternity benefits and equal remuneration for women. A legislation to secure one-third reservation to women in the Parliament of India is currently under process. The Protection of Women for Domestic Violence Act is helping to act as a deterrent as well as providing legal recourse to women who are victims of any kind of domestic violence. A new scheme, Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY), for pregnant and lactating women has been approved by the Government. A woman Government servant having minor children below the age of 18 years may be granted child care leave for a maximum period of two years, i.e.730 days during the entire service for taking care of up to two children whether for rearing or to look after any of their needs like examination, sickness, etc.

Shri Chaturvedi mentioned that lack of work opportunities in home countries have led to the movement of people across borders. India has enacted the Emigration Act in 1983. The Act provides for the regulatory framework in respect of Indian workers for overseas employment on contractual basis and seeks to safeguard their interest and also to ensure their welfare. The Act makes it mandatory for registration of recruiting agents with the Office of Protector General of Emigrants for conducting business of recruitment of specified categories for overseas employment.

Shri Chaturvedi concluded by stating that all countries have major responsibility in steering and contributing to international action on the elimination of discrimination and inequality in the work-place. We appreciate that ILO has shown itself to be the leading body in combating discrimination and promoting equality, right from its inception. We the member countries of ILO should reiterate our commitment at this forum to ensure Decent Work & Equal opportunity in the World of Work, which alone can form the foundation of equitable and balanced growth.

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