**India’s inputs for the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on conducting a needs assessment, in particular for developing countries, to support their efforts to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in responding to pandemics and other health emergencies, and the socioeconomic consequences thereof, in advancing sustainable development and the realization of all human rights:**

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in January 2020, countries across the world have faced unprecedented challenges in different sectors, health, economy, education, travel and tourism, to name a few. The healthcare and associated infrastructure has come under stress due to the sudden rise in requirement of isolation beds, ICU and other life saving facilities. Even segregating the COVID patients from non-COVID patients at public health facilities posed a challenge. India did not have enough capacity to produce Personal Protection Equipments (PPEs) and equipments like ventilators domestically, initially. Disruption in their global supply chains only aggravated the situation. The pandemic also threatened the livelihood security of millions of Indians belonging to the lower and lower-middle income category due to the disruption in their economic activity. The strict lock-down measures imposed during late March to May 2020 which became essential to save lives have also had their negative impact. At the macro level, like the economies of many countries, India’s also suffered setbacks.

2. India based its COVID-19 strategy on the mantra, "*Jaan Bhi, Jahan Bhi*” i.e., we should care for both life and livelihood. We started our flight-screening systems from 17 January 2020, a full 13 days before the first case was detected in the country. Screening and graded travel restrictions were increased step by step from mid-January up to March 11, when WHO finally declared the COVID-19 to be a pandemic. Measures to encourage social distancing, including graded stoppage of international flights and suspension of visas, were implemented from March 11. From March 24, a full-nationwide lockdown was imposed. Subsequently, the Government took steps, in phases, to lift restrictions taking into consideration the evolving situation. India is a quasi-federal Union. Health is a subject in the State List under the Constitution of India. States have been taking their own steps to deal with the pandemic in addition to the measures taken by the Government of India. Due to the increase in testing numbers, contact tracing, effective isolation protocol, efficient use of hospital beds, increased availability of medical equipment, testing kits and sustained public awareness campaign, India’s recovery rate is now 96.41% (as on 18 March 2021) and case fatality rate has dropped to 1.39%.

3. The WHO has acknowledged that India’s public health responses have been proactive, pre-emptive and graded. All the while, we have been successful in maintaining continuity of essential services - power supply, water, energy, food products, banking, and delivering essential goods in many cases in the entire country. Thousands of relief camps and shelters have been set up, with relief provided by the State Governments. Industries, Civil Society Organisations and NGOs have also been actively involved in these efforts. Nationwide, food camps were organized and up to 7.5 million people were fed every day.

4. The management of the lockdown and the repercussions of it have been monitored minutely by the Prime Minister, in regular consultation with the Chief Ministers of States through video conference. A Group of Ministers has been constituted to review and monitor the contagion and responses in this regard. A Committee of Secretaries has been set up to coordinate our responses nationwide. Eleven Empowered Groups have been set up for an integrated, all-of-Government response, including bringing onboard the civil society wherever feasible. A National Task Force of eminent public health and medical experts has also been set up to guide our national strategy.

5. The Prime Minister’s Garib Kalyan (Welfare of the Poor) Package set out USD 38 billion to alleviate the situation of the poor and vulnerable, including farmers and labourers, and protect them from the impact of the crisis. This includes insurance for health care workers. Food relief measures have been implemented to provide free food grains and lentils for 800 million people. LPG cylinders have been provided to 80 million poor households. Funds have been transferred through our direct cash transfer schemes to over 400 million poor senior citizens, differently-abled people, indigent widows and farmers.

6. We have also been able to add enormous indigenous production capacity in PPEs, testing kits, medicines, etc. Best practices adopted in different States and Union Territories in the fight against COVID-19 range from preparation of comprehensive route maps for contact tracing to operationalization of mobile vans for testing and providing essential health services to the doorsteps of people. Technology has been leveraged extensively, including the use of robots for delivering food, water, and medicines to patients in hospitals as well as training health personnel using virtual platforms. Start-ups have been at the forefront of several technological innovations, such as the development of apps offering telemedicine services. Civil society organizations too have worked closely with the Government to set up control rooms for COVID management, enable the delivery of door-to-door food supplies, and mobilize self-help groups for making masks and sanitizers. The Co-WIN portal is the digital backbone for the ongoing vaccination drive in India. It allows citizens to register and book an appointment for vaccination, anytime and anywhere.

7. The Government has also undertaken repatriation operations under the Vande Bharat Mission which started on 7 May, 2020 to facilitate the return of Indian nationals stranded abroad in a phased manner. Our efforts to bring back stranded Indian citizens from abroad by air, sea and land under this Mission has also been an important part of India’s fight against the COVID-19. It is one of the largest and most complex repatriation missions in the history of modern India. It has required inter-Ministerial cooperation at the Union level, close coordination with State Governments in India and with Foreign Governments. We have transported more than 4 million Indian nationals in nine phases back and forth from multiple points across the world to India. Its current form involves air bubbles with 24 countries and continuing evacuation flights. We have not only brought our stranded citizens back but also facilitated repatriation of foreign nationals stuck in India.

8. While we have been successfully dealing with the pandemic within India, we have taken steps to help fellow developing countries, in our own region and elsewhere, in their fight against the disease. India has been called the "Pharmacy of the World” as we ensured supply of essential medicines even while meeting our own domestic requirements. Delivery of essential medicines and equipment has amply demonstrated that India is a responsible stakeholder in global health supply chains. India provided this medical assistance, in the form of essential drugs such as hydroxychloroquine and paracetamol, test kits, protection gear, etc., to over 150 countries, including to about 80 of them on grant basis. An economy which did not manufacture ventilators, testing kits, PPEs and N95 masks today not only caters to its own needs, but those beyond.

9. From the very beginning, India has believed that the pandemic threatens the entire humanity and that the rightful response would therefore be a collective one. Accordingly, even as early as 15 March 2020, our Prime Minister took the initiative to hold a meeting of SAARC Heads of Government to fashion a regional solution. An important outcome was the creation of the SAARC COVID-19 Fund to meet the urgent financial requirements of regional countries to fight the pandemic. We committed USD 10 million to the fund.

10. We have since organised workshops and training courses to strengthen capacities in our region for handling vaccines and other aspects of public health and COVID-19 management. Most recently, that was followed up by a meeting of senior health officials of the region on 18 February 2021. They shared the outcome of their deliberations with the Prime Minister, who urged a special visa scheme for doctors and nurses, coordinating a regional air ambulance agreement, a platform for studying data on the effectiveness of vaccines and a network for technology-assisted epidemiology for preventing future pandemics.

11. Our efforts went well beyond the neighbourhood when it came to online training and capability building. The Ministry of External Affairs conducted 14 e-ITEC courses in partnership with premier institutions like the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh. An exclusive course was conducted in Bangla for Bangladeshi professionals and another by the Armed Forces Medical Services for the military doctors in South-East Asia. These 14 courses had a total of 1131 professional participants from 47 countries.

12. We truly believe in making vaccines accessible and affordable to others in dire need. Our domestic vaccination programme started in January 2021 and within a few days, we also started supplying the ‘Made in India’ vaccines to our immediate neighbours. The basis for doing so was the assurance that Prime Minister gave in his virtual address to the UN General Assembly in September 2020. On that occasion, he declared that India’s vaccine production and delivery capacity will be used to help all humanity in fighting this crisis. We also offered to enhance cold chain and storage capacities for the delivery of vaccines. Prime Minister Modi in several interventions in the UN General Assembly, in NAM and G-20 summits, in a SAARC leaders conference and in several other platforms has stressed that the pandemic has shown us the limitations of the existing international system. A purely economic agenda has defined globalization so far, and we have cooperated more to balance competing individual interests, rather than advancing the collective interests of all human kind. We need a new template of globalization, based on fairness, equality and humanity in the post-COVID world. In planning and executing Vaccine Maitri, we are guided by a determination to make a difference at a difficult moment for global society.

13. Vaccine Maitri began in our immediate neighbourhood, starting with the Maldives, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, as also Mauritius and Seychelles. The extended neighbourhood followed thereafter, especially the Gulf. Supplying smaller and more vulnerable nations was then the logic of reaching out to regions from Africa to the CARICOM. There were also contracts that our producers have entered into with other nations, either bilaterally or through the COVAX initiative. To date, we have supplied ‘Made in India’ vaccines to 72 nations across geographies. Most recently, USA, Japan and Australia have come together with India to expand safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing in India to produce at least 1 billion doses by the end of 2022 and to finance the increase in manufacturing capacity.

14. India has continued with its developmental partnerships including technical assistance, training and capacity building programmes as well as implementation of developmental projects, including infrastructure development projects, with a view to enable countries to continue to make progress in their development while dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

15. In its latest World Economic Outlook Update, the IMF has revised its forecast for India’s growth rate to 11.5% for 2021. As per the Economic Survey 2020-21, India’s real GDP is set record a 11.0% growth in the financial year 2021-22 and the nominal GDP will grow by 15.4%, the highest since independence. Our economic recovery will continue to contribute to global economic recovery and act as an engine of global economic growth, which will have positive impact on the realization of Sustainable Development Goals and the enjoyment of basic human rights by the people globally.

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