United Nations A/HRC/51/NGO/45

General Assembly

Distr.: General
29 August 2022

English only

Human Rights Council
Fifty-first session
12 September–7 October 2022
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by "ECO-FAWN" (Environment Conservation Organization - Foundation for Afforestation Wild Animals and Nature), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[17 August 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

India's Contributions to Sustainable Development Goal 6 and Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, through robust water management initiatives

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 and provides a blueprint for shared, sustainable prosperity. The core of this agenda is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG); a call to action for a global partnership and a reminder that the eradication of poverty must operate hand-in-hand with strategies for improving health, reducing inequality and battling climate change.1 Sustainable Development Goal 6 speaks to the universal availability of clean water and sanitation. This is a natural corollary of the obligations of India (and all other countries) under Article 12 (2) (b) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), viz. States Parties shall take steps to achieve the full realization of the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest standards of physical and mental health, including those necessary for improvement of all aspects of environmental and industrial hygiene. This is a particular challenge in India, a densely populated country that accounts for 17% of the world's population but boasts only 4% of the world's freshwater resources.2 In addition to this, balancing India's water budget faces additional difficulties as 80% of India's rainfall is received between the months of June to September in the monsoon period. Often the deluges result in floods rendering efficient exploitation of the water difficult.3 India is already working on technological solutions to these challenges. The Ministry of Jal Shakti, the nodal Ministry overseeing the management of India's water resources is collaborating with the World Bank on the National Hydrology Projects (NHP). Currently, approximately 6,000 sensors are being installed across India with the intention of collecting data on lakes, rivers and reservoirs. An additional 1,600 sensors have been deployed underwater. These sensors will be connected to the mobile-phone network and provide real-time updates on water levels, rainfall, humidity and air-pressure. Systems are also being developed to provide this data on a centralized open source system and software is being developed for the analysis of the data.4 India's approach to tackling the challenges of water availability is not restricted to technological solutions. Much of India's population is in far-flung rural areas. A comprehensive effort requires concerted effort at the grassroots level to understand and resolve issues. The Government has empowered non governmental organizations (NGOs) and charities focused on water management. In many villages, committees are formed to study water scarcity. With the assistance of professionals, villagers are trained to harvest rainwater and develop more efficient irrigation systems.5 The local government provides grants for small water projects of this nature across the country. In many cases, the result has been water-sufficient villages in drought-prone areas where in the past women often had to walk several kilometers a day to fetch water from other sources. According to Dr. Marcelle D'Souza, of Watershed Organization Trust, such projects are essential to the management of India's water resources. Water management is a sufficiently complex issue that no single agency can address it alone, but with the aid of the local community and village councils, progress is being made. This decentralized approach to water sufficiency and sanitation would not have been sufficient without significant financial backing. Pursuant to the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission, Rupees 1.42 trillion were set aside for local grants to Gram Panchayats (village councils) for water and sanitation amidst a push for assured tap water supply and improved sanitation in villages across India.6 India's goal with regard to rural water supply is ambitious. Since August 2019, India's Jal Jeevan Mission has been striving to ensure improved sanitation in rural areas and the availability of potable tap water. The goal has been to provide a long-term supply of drinking water at reasonable service delivery charges. Rs. 36 billion has been set aside in the budget for this need.7 Sustainable Development Goal 6 emphasizes the need for sanitation and provision of clean water. This has been a cornerstone of the Indian vision and India has aimed to provide a regular supply of clean drinking water to every household, even in remote areas. Considering the scope of the challenge and the need for decentralized decision-making, a significant outlay has been made for local grants towards the development of these capacities. In addition to this, India has invested in the development of the technical capabilities needed to monitor and analyze its water situation, allowing for the analysis of data and more precise decision-

making. As a result of these initiatives India is well-placed to achieve its goal of providing sustainable water management and universal sanitation for its population.

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1 http://sdgs.un.org/goals 2 https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2019-08/CWMI-2.0-latest.pdf 3 https://www.bbc.com/news/business-61965419 4 https://www.livemint.com/Politics/PIw4Am8WeByAC14UsW4MRL/World-Bank-approves-175-million-loan-for National-Hydrology.html 5 https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/exploring-water-secure-future-grassroots-priti-adani 6 https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1750188 7 https://jaljeevanmission.gov.in/about_jjm