

Statement at the Forum for Minority UN

Liberation

15<sup>th</sup> Dec, 2010

Sagar Zende,

Concrete Steps to advance and build capacity of minorities to participate effectively in economic life

Madam Chairperson,

Thank you.

The caste system is exploitative economic arrangements. Dalits are highly excluded from the economic sphere, the mainstream sectors such as businesses, market, and media under-represent Dalits. Thus, any strategy to combat discrimination against Dalits must begin with a meaningful understanding of the economics of exclusion.

The affirmative action for Dalits assists less than 1 percent of the Dalit population. There is a large body of legislation and administrative agency mandates assigned but due to the lack of political will, development programs designed for Dalits are not implemented. For instance, the congress party in its manifesto of National common minimum programme year 2003 proposed reservation for Dalits in private sector but even after 8 years it hasn't yet been implemented. The reservation in private sector is out rightly denied by the corporate sectors which strongly influence the economical policy making processes.

I would like to talk about the steps, international body, government of India and civil society should take to enhance participation of Dalits in economic life. The intersections of Caste, Class, Gender should be specifically kept in mind while framing policies for Dalits.

Government should make investment in qualitative education of international standards for Dalits, to compete with the market and the globalisation. This will be a social safety net for the present and future generations of Dalits. Governments should come up with effective mechanisms to implement the affirmative action proposed by the international bodies as well as the policy recommendations made by Dalit civil society. Research and development centres devoted to Dalit issues should be created and be equipped to produce publicized disaggregated data demonstrating existing inequalities and to measure and monitor the effective participation of Dalits in economic life.

Updated databases of employable Dalits should be created, centres to disseminate information on training and employment opportunity should be set up. Timely information should be reached to eligible Dalit. Dalit should not be the participants but have ownership in the process of policy formulation as well the implementation.

International bodies such as the UN though the minority forum has initiated action oriented conferences such as this one and it is the Governments now, who should comply to and act upon the recommendations put forth for ensuring inclusive, equal, effective economic life for Dalits and minorities.