

Meeting of the National Advisory Council

10 June 2010

Initial Agenda: Suggested Topics

**2 Motilal Nehru Place
New Delhi**

1 Background

1.1 The first National Advisory Council was constituted on 31 May, 2004 to provide inputs for the formulation of policy by the Government, assist in monitoring the progress of implementation of the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) and provide support to the Government in its legislative business.

1.2 Under the leadership and guidance of the Chairperson, the discussions in earlier NAC covered a wide range of commitments outlined in the NCMP. In August 2004, the Chairperson, NAC forwarded detailed recommendations to the Government in respect of two key elements of NCMP, namely, the Right to Information (RTI) Act and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). Several other recommendations were also made to the Government such as on universalization of elementary education (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), the Tribal Rights Bill, Equality of Women, Judicial Reforms, National Rural Roads Programme, the Unorganized Sector Workers Social Security Bill, Modernization of Land Revenue Administration and Clear Land Titles, Rural Cooperative Credit Institutions, Watershed and Wasteland Development Programmes, Integrated Energy Policy, the National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council, HIV/AIDS Control Programmes, the National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, issues relating to Governance and Public Administration and the National Environment Policy, National Parks and Sanctuaries.

1.3 Between July 2004 – February 2006, 22 meetings were held and 29 meetings between April 2006 – February 2008.

1.4 Between April 2006 – February 2008, the deliberations addressed, inter alia, the ICDS, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) the MDM, the National Rural Health Mission, the Comprehensive Modernization of Land Records, the National River Conservation Programme including the Ganga Action Plan, the National Rural Roads Programme, the Jawahar Lal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission, Use of Geo Textiles, Poverty Alleviation Programmes of the Ministry of rural development, vocational education mission, rural electrification, a vision for microfinance, development of the ports sector, the national AIDS control effort, welfare of minorities and strengthening of the targeted public distribution system.

1.5 The Council focused on “monitoring the implementation of key programmes” and undertook a review of its recommendations in regard to major items in the social sector in order to identify the gaps and bottlenecks in their effective implementation and recommend remedial measures.

2 National Advisory Council: Terms of Reference

2.1 The present National Advisory Council (NAC) was constituted vide order No. 1/3/2/2010 – Cab dated March, 29, 2010 (copy enclosed).

2.2 The Members of the NAC were notified vide Order no. 1/3/2/2010-Cab dated May 31, 2010 (copy enclosed).

2.3 The Terms of Reference of the earlier NAC were as follows:

- a To monitor the progress of implementation of the **Common Minimum Programme**;
- b To provide inputs for the formulation of policy by the Government and to provide support to Government in its legislative business.

2.4 The order notifying the present NAC has not specifically mentioned the Terms of Reference. Hence the following is being proposed:

- a To monitor the progress of implementation of the **UPA Government's Agenda as outlined in the address of the President of India to Parliament on June 4, 2009**;
- b To provide inputs for the formulation of policy by the Government and to provide support to Government in its legislative business.

2.5 The 10 broad areas of priority for the UPA Government highlighted in the President's address are as follows:

- • Internal security and preservation of communal harmony;
- Stepping up of economic growth in agriculture, manufacturing and services;
- Consolidation of the existing flagship programmes for employment, education, health, rural infrastructure, urban renewal and introduction of new flagship programmes for food security and skill development;
- Concerted action for the welfare of women, youth, children, other backward classes, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities, the differently –abled and the elderly along with strengthened social protection;
- Governance reform;
- Creation and modernization of infrastructure and capacity addition in key sectors
- Prudent fiscal management
- Energy security and environment protection;
- Constructive and creative engagement with the world; and
- ✱ • Promotion of a culture of enterprise and innovation

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3 Suggested Topics for consideration of NAC

3.1 Based on the President's address a list of topics have been identified for consideration of and prioritization by the NAC. These may be categorized as *Programme Review*, *Policy Review*, *Legislative Agenda* or *Administrative Agenda* and related to the following areas:

- Food Security and Revitalization of Agriculture
- Poverty Alleviation and Employment Generation
- Empowerment of Weaker Sections, Social Security & Safety Nets
- Reduction in Regional Disparities
- Health Security
- Right to Education
- Safety and Security
- Judicial Reforms
- Good Governance
- Urban Renewal
- Others

3.2 The list of suggested topics is not exhaustive. It comprises some items carried forward from the unfinished agenda of the earlier NAC.

3.3 The present NAC may consider identifying strategic areas for intervention, specifically in the social sector, where its recommendations can make a significant impact in policy formulation or in remedying bottlenecks in implementation.

Suggested Topics

1 Food Security & Revitalization of Agriculture

- ***Enacting rapidly a Right to Food Security Act:*** Fast-tracking the establishment of the legislation to bring about comprehensive food security to all citizens while ensuring a legal entitlement for all families below the poverty line to 25kg of rice or wheat per month at Rs 3 per kg. The legislation will also be used to bring about broader systemic reform in the public distribution system.
- ***Suggesting pathways for a Second Green Revolution*** through a strategy of high and inclusive growth that is also sustainable: Focusing on rainfed agriculture and 85% of farmers who are small and marginal, through application of science and technology, sustainable management of natural resources and participatory watershed development. Preparing district agricultural plans and ensuring convergence among various centrally sponsored schemes.
- ***Ensuring Cooperatives Reforms:*** While a Bill to amend the Constitution has already been tabled in Parliament to usher changes in the cooperative sector there still exist qualitative flaws in the Indian cooperative movement, in spite of its voluminous growth. The major flaws are undemocratic practices, lack of accountability and professional management, and low productivity. There is a need for comprehensive reform on the Cooperatives sector.

2 Poverty Alleviation and Employment Generation

- ***Building on the success of NREGA:*** through deepening its accountability and transparency dimensions, creating durable and productive assets and promoting sustainable livelihoods through convergence of NREGA with productivity enhancing programmes of agriculture, horticulture, agro-forestry and forestry.
- ***Implementing the National Rural Livelihoods Mission*** based on widening and deepening the Self Help Group (SHG) movement through learning from the Andhra Pradesh experience.
- ***Providing impetus to the Skill Development Mission*** to scale-up manifold the training and capacity building activities of youth being undertaken through the public sector as well as through public private partnership to enhance their employability and thereby to reap the demographic dividend.
- ***Fostering a New Deal for SMEs and first generation entrepreneurs:*** The Government has to enact measures such as greater access to collateral-free credit and availability of venture capital, liberating them from the multiplicity of laws and forms, freeing them from the clutches of inspectors.

3 Empowerment of Vulnerable Sections, Social Security and Safety Nets

- ***Providing greater impetus to the empowerment of weaker sections*** of society by improving implementation of Special Component Plan (SCP) for scheduled castes and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) for scheduled tribes
- ***Suggesting measures to strengthen programmes and schemes*** for socio-economic development of minorities, women and children with emphasis on health and education.
- ***Recommending improvement in schemes for enhancing nutritional status of children,*** namely the Mid-Day Meal and the ICDS and other innovative ways to mitigate child malnutrition.

- **Recommending improvement in schemes for enhancing nutritional status of children,** namely the Mid-Day Meal and the ICDS and other innovative ways to mitigate child malnutrition.
- **Moving towards comprehensive social security:** Focus on National Social Security Fund for unorganised sector workers and special incentives to improve the socio-economic condition of single-woman headed households, disabled and the elderly, urban homeless, released bonded workers, members of primitive tribal groups and members of designated “most backward” dalit communities.
- **Streamlining the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP):** Need to revisit norms for old age, widow and severely disabled persons below poverty line receiving pension at the rate of Rs. 200 per month.
- **Fast tracking implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act** for preparing the forest land records for the recognized rights, mapping of common forests for community management, and developing management plans
- **Enacting the Migrant Labour Protection Act:** A law that will make it mandatory for state governments to guarantee to migrants, security of life and property.

4 Reduction in Regional Disparities

- **Following up on special packages** provided by the central government to regions such as Bundelkhand (UP & MP), Vidarbha (Maharashtra), KBK (Orissa), Special Status States and Regions, as part of the overall strategy of inclusive growth.
- **Addressing constraints in development of Left Wing Extremist districts** in a way which makes the tribals true partners in the development process; by expediting their land entitlements, allowing them to manage forests sustainably, giving them a stake in industrial and mining projects that threaten to deprive them of their livelihoods.

5 Health Security

- **Devising a National Health Policy guaranteeing health security for all:** Expanding the cover provided by the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana to all families living below the poverty line over the next two years and coverage for all NREGA households.

6 Right to Education

- ***Following up on the Right to Education Act being implemented from 1 April 2010 to provide impetus :*** RTE Act 2009, offers a unique opportunity to correct the anomaly of poor education outcomes, and can deliver on the long-standing commitment of providing basic and quality education to children between 6 and 14 years of age. Bottlenecks in its implementation need to be resolved.

7 Empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions

- ***Strengthening the finances of Panchayati Raj Institutions*** by ensuring significant increase in the devolutions to Panchayats. Greater autonomy in use of funds.
- ***Empowering Panchayats through access to information*** by connecting all villages to a broadband network in three years time

8 Safety & Security

- ***Enacting a Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Act:*** A legislation to empower the Central and State governments to prevent any form of communal violence that threatens the secular fabric and internal security of our nation. This holistic legislation will also provide for the rehabilitation of victims of such violence.

9 Judicial Reforms

- ***Pursuing Judicial Reforms to cut delay in Court:*** The very first measure that is required is the reduction of delays in the settlement of cases and the dispensation of justice.
- ***Ensuring meaningful implementation of Gram Nyayalaya Act:*** While the Gram Nyayalaya Act has become law, it is still in the nascent stages of implementation. The law lays out the broad uniform framework but the enforcement of its provisions is a challenge that has to be overcome.

10 Good Governance

- ***Cutting through the red-tape in government rules and procedures:*** A comprehensive review of the onerous rules and procedures of government across the board will help ensure enhanced efficiency and responsiveness of the government.
- ***Implementing a Public Expenditure Tracking System:*** To ensure greater accountability, the government needs a system to track the flow of funds, especially on the flagship schemes on a real time basis. This needs to be done as an urgent priority

11 Urban Renewal

- ***Recognizing that the pace of urbanization is increasing rapidly*** there is need to explore new models of urban administration, provision of basic infrastructure and special dispensation for the urban poor.

12 Programme Review (based on civil society feedback and inputs)

- Reviewing implementation of key flagship programmes like NREGA, NRHM, Bharat Nirman (rural roads, rural water supply, rural housing, rural electrification, irrigation, telephone connections), Forest Rights Act, 2006 and recommendations of important committees like Administrative Reforms Commission and National Commission on Unorganised Sector

Others

- Addressing issues of Climate Change through eight national missions. Taking steps to protect and rejuvenate the natural environment
- Undertaking a major renewal of the extensive science and technology infrastructure
- Ensuring energy security for the country
- Taking steps to preserve and promote the country's heritage