

Opening remarks of Hon'ble HRM Shri Kapil Sibal at the 57th Meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education held on 19th June 2010

I have great pleasure in welcoming you all to this 57th Meeting of CABE. I welcome my colleagues from the Central Government and the Education Ministers of the State Governments, as also all the distinguished members of the CABE, who have taken time off from their busy schedules to be with us today. I also offer my heartfelt condolences on the demise of Padmashree Prof. Ramaranjan Mukherjee who had been a distinguished member of the CABE.

2. I firmly believe that CABE has a very important role to play at the present juncture when the Central Government has substantially enhanced the outlay in the education sector. India is a nation of young people – out of a population of above 1.1 billion, 672 million people are in the age-group 15 to 64 years, which is usually treated as the “working age population”. It is predicted that India will see a sharp decline in the dependency ratio over the next 30 years, which will constitute a major demographic dividend for India. For this purpose we need a three pronged strategy:-

- (a) To increase GER in Higher Education to 30% by the year 2020 which would mean a three times increase in our enrolment in higher education from nearly 14 million to 40 million by 2020;
- (b) To provide vocational education to all those 150-160 million youth who would still be left out of higher education, even after we achieve a GER of 30%;
- (c) To strengthen the base of elementary and secondary education and in particular, to reduce the drop-out rates.

3. Since the last meeting of CABE, children's fundamental right to elementary education has come into force on 1st April, 2010. All of us present in this room would welcome the fact that Article 21-A of the Constitution and the

Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act have become operative. I have received letters from Chief Ministers, Education Ministers, academics, educationists and child rights activists from across the country commending the Government for enacting this legislation. Prime Minister made an address to the nation pledging full support to its implementation. The time has come for us to act on this legislation and fulfill our promise to the children of our country.

4. I am reminded of the very insightful and perceptive statement made by Shri MC Chagla in 1964, when he was Education Minister. He said: (Quote) “*Our Constitution fathers did not intend that we set up hovels, put student there, give untrained teachers, give them bad textbooks, no playgrounds and say, we have complied with Article 45 and primary education is expanding...They meant that **real** education should be given to our children between the ages of 6 and 14*” (Unquote). Article 21-A and the RTE Act provide us an opportunity to institute governance reform in the elementary education system that would give every child, irrespective of caste, creed, location or gender, access to education of a comparable quality. The RTE Act provides us a unique opportunity for systemic reform to ensure that our school spaces are, in fact, ‘*warm, welcoming and encouraging*’.

5. We are concerned about recent reports on suicides by children on account of corporal punishment, expulsion and detention. This is clearly against the law and must be dealt with firmly. I have also had one-on-one discussions with Education Ministers of several States, including the NER States – on the steps taken to implement the provisions of the Act, including reform in teacher preparation, teacher recruitment, teacher re-deployment and teacher development. The agenda for this meeting includes an item on the harmonization of SSA with RTE. During the course of your interventions today, I look forward to receiving your suggestions and hearing about progress in this direction.

6. The reforms in higher education are inevitable if we have to leverage our human resources potential for a stronger economy and a prosperous society.

You are aware that we had constituted a Task Force to follow-up on the recommendations of Yash Pal Committee and National Knowledge Commission. This Task force has prepared draft legislation and has held consultations across the country. Based on these suggestions and the concerns expressed on behalf of the states, as well as the academic community, the Task Force has revised its proposal which is now called the Higher Education and Research Bill. Members of the Task Force are with us today and they would be making a brief presentation on the revised draft legislation and I am sure the members of the Task Force will benefit from the valuable suggestions of the hon'ble members of CABE.

7. A legislative proposal named "National Academic Depository Bill, 2010" has also been prepared. The proposal provides for creation of a national electronic database of academic awards and its maintenance by an authorized depository appointed for the purpose. It proposes to make it mandatory for academic institutions including universities and other higher educational institutions, Central and State Boards of Education, to lodge the academic awards given by them with all relevant details such as mark-sheets, in the national database. Holding of academic awards in an electronic depository would provide immense benefit to educational institutions, students, alumni and employers by enabling them to obtain online, transcripts of such awards or mark-sheets, or for verification. It would also reduce the need for institutions to preserve records related to academic performance to students over a long time. The system could also eliminate fraudulent practices such as forging of certificates and mark-sheets through facilitating online verification.

8. I would also like to make a mention of 4 new Legislative proposals initiated by the Government. The four Bills namely, a Bill to Prohibit and Punish Unfair Practices in Technical and Medical Educational Institutions and Universities, a Bill to provide for Mandatory Accreditation of all Higher Educational Institutions and to provide an institutional structure for the purpose; a Bill to Regulate the Entry and Operation of Foreign Educational Institutions in India, and a Bill to

provide for the Establishment of Educational Tribunals to adjudicate on the entire gamut of disputes that arise in the higher educational sector have been introduced in Parliament.

9. A scheme has been introduced to provide central assistance for setting up of a model degree college in each of the identified 374 educationally backward districts where Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for higher education is less than the national GER. Under the Scheme, the Central Government shall provide assistance to the extent of one third of the capital cost for establishment of each college, limited to Rs.2.67 crore. For Special Category States, the Central share shall be 50% of the capital cost limited to Rs.4 crore for each College. We have discussed this matter with the State Education Ministers yesterday.

10. A Centrally Sponsored Scheme namely “National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (ICT)” is under implementation to leverage the potential of ICT, in teaching and learning process. The Mission envisages to provide high quality personalized and interactive knowledge modules over the internet/intranet for all the learners in higher education institutions in anytime any where mode, as one of its components. It also aims to provide the benefit of broadband connectivity to all institutions of higher learning, empowerment of teachers to make use of ICT in teaching and learning process and to promote research to invent new dimensions for use of ICT in higher education, including those through distance mode. Under this Mission, upto March 2010 more than 30000 VPN and Internet connections have been provided to more than 7500 colleges across the country and soon all Universities would get 1 Giga bit per second connectivity to NKN nodes to enable true collaboration and knowledge sharing among institutions of higher learning and centers of excellence.

11. A Concept Note on establishment of 14 Innovation Universities aiming at world class standards has been prepared and placed in the public domain for wider consultation. The Concept Note visualizes that Innovation Universities may be established by multiple modes i.e. publicly funded, privately funded, public-

private partnership or by eminent foreign universities. Draft legislation on this subject has also been prepared.

12. As I mentioned earlier, there is a need to focus on vocational education so as to provide avenues to 150-160 million youth who will not be able to make it to higher education even after we increase the access to say 30% GER by 2020. A National Vocation Qualification Framework is a must to provide a common reference for linking various qualifications.

13. We also need to develop a core-curriculum on Science and Mathematics at higher secondary stage. A meeting of COBSE was held on 16.02.2010, in which representatives of 20 out of 29 boards conducting higher secondary examination were present. Those present unanimously decided to adopt the core curriculum in Science and Maths from the session 2011-12. CBE may consider and endorse the same from the academic session 2011-12 as also adoption of core curriculum in Commerce subject from the academic session 2012-13.

14. National Education Policy and XI Five Year Plan document stipulates that Government expenditure on education would be enhanced to 6% of the GDP. While the expenditure of the Central Government in the education as a percentage of GDP has gone up from about 0.65% to over 0.90%, the expenditure on education of all the States put together has come down from about 3.78% to 2.75% of GDP. With the higher allocation by Central Government in the education in the XI plan period, the share of Central Government as a percentage of GDP is likely to go up. If we have to achieve the targeted figure of public expenditure on education as 6% of GDP, the States will have to increase their education budget. I am sure that the Education Ministers representing the States, will take note of it and put all efforts achieving this goal which is so crucial to the overall development and growth of our mission.

15. I am sure that this meeting of CAFE will discuss all these and many other issues of interest to the members and will contribute immensely towards formulation of policies. I take this opportunity to call for cooperation and suggestions of all stakeholders particularly the State Governments and academic community through this meeting of CAFE and I hope that we would be able to chalk out and work on an agreed action plan. I hope that we will all find the deliberations of today's meeting fruitful.

Thank you.