

Reference by the Chairman

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CHAIRMAN: Hon'ble Members, today, April 2, is observed globally as World Autism Awareness Day, as designated by the United Nations. On this occasion, this House reiterates its commitment to safeguarding the rights and promoting the welfare of persons with autism.

The United Nations theme for this year, “**Advancing Neurodiversity and the UN Sustainable Development Goals**”, emphasises the need to recognise neurodiversity as an integral part of human diversity and to ensure that our developmental efforts are inclusive and sustainable. Autism Spectrum Disorder affects communication, behaviour and social interaction; however, individuals on the spectrum possess distinctive strengths and capabilities which, with appropriate support and opportunities, can greatly enrich our society.

India has put in place a robust legislative framework through the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and the National Trust Act, 1999, to secure rights and extend necessary support services. Nevertheless, laws and schemes achieve their true purpose only when their benefits reach every eligible individual. Greater focus on early diagnosis, inclusive education, skill training and awareness at the community level is essential to bridge existing gaps and promote equality.

Hon'ble Members, on this significant day, let us reaffirm our collective determination to foster an environment of understanding, acceptance and equal participation. An inclusive society is strengthened when every citizen, irrespective of ability, is given the opportunity to contribute and succeed. It is our shared responsibility to ensure that persons with autism are not merely accommodated, but fully empowered as valued members of our national community.

RKK

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