

## **BACKGROUND NOTE ON NATIONAL INTEGRATION COUNCIL**

The then Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, convened National Integration Conference in September-October, 1961 to find ways and means to combat the evils of communalism, casteism, regionalism, linguism and narrow-mindedness, and to formulate definite conclusions in order to give a lead to the country. This Conference decided to set up a National Integration Council (NIC) to review all matters pertaining to national integration and to make recommendations thereon. The NIC was constituted accordingly and held its first meeting in 1962.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Council**

The NIC declared its objectives in the meeting held in 1968. The declaration of objectives as adopted by the NIC is as follows :-

“The foundation of our national life is common citizenship, unity in diversity, freedom of religions, secularism, equality, justice-social-economic and political, and fraternity among all communities. The National Integration Council reiterates its faith in these values and dedicates itself to their achievement.

The National Integration Council, however, notes with concerned the increase in communal incidents in different parts of the country over the last few years. The Council emphasizes that not withstanding sporadic occurrences of communal and other divisive conflicts, the vast majority of common men and women, irrespective of their religious affiliations, live in peace and harmony and have no interest in violence and disorders.

The National Integration Council condemns tendencies that strike at the root of national solidarity and calls upon all political parties, voluntary organizations, other citizen groups, the press, leaders of opinion and indeed all men of good will to bring them to a halt:

- by discouraging communal ill-will and regional animosities and weaning the misguided elements of society from paths of violence;
- by active and energetic propagation of the principles, especially of tolerance and harmony for which this nation stands,

- by mobilizing constructive forces of society in the cause of national unity and solidarity and giving them leadership encouragement and articulation; and
- by devising suitable community activities and programmes for fostering fellow feeling, emphasizing the privileges of common citizenship and in general raising the quality of national life.

The council wishes to emphasize that this task is not of Governments alone although governments have to play a major role in strengthening the forces of integration and in implementing expeditiously and effectively the recommendations that this council makes. This task is the collective responsibility of all citizens-politicians, educationists, artists, writers, teachers, parents and students, intellectuals businessmen and trade union leaders.

This council most earnestly invites all Indians, regardless of their linguistic, religious, ethnic or cultural affiliations to join in this great and urgent task of promoting national unity and solidarity”.

### **1.3 National Integration Council Meetings**

The National Integration Council has held 16<sup>th</sup> meetings so far. Issues relating to National Integration and Communal Harmony in the context of Kashmir and Punjab problem and dispute over Ram Janam Bhoomi – Babri Masjid, problem of Regionalism and Communalism, role of Educational Institutions and Mass Media and responsibility of the Press, equitable development and removal of regional imbalances, promotion of feeling of security among minorities and other vulnerable sections and promotion of education among minorities, Safety and security of women, measures to tackle crimes against SCs/STs were discussed in the various meetings of NIC.

The National Integration Council (NIC) has recently been reconstituted and the meeting of the reconstituted NIC under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2013. The NIC discussed the following issues in detail:-

- Communal Harmony- Measures to promote communal harmony, measures to prevent communal disturbances, role of social networking sites to promote national integration, tackling hate propaganda.
  
- Confidence building measures to tackle communal disturbances, tackling communal situations, taking help from all sections of society in removing communal tension.
  
- Safety and security of women.
  
- Measures to tackle crimes against SCs/STs, positive intervention and proper implementation of development schemes, laws relating to SCs/STs, associating all sections of society in removing inter-caste tension.

In the end a resolution was passed unanimously by the NIC :-

- To condemn violence in any form committed to disturb communal harmony and to deal with all those indulging in such violence in a prompt and resolute manner under the law.
  
- To take all measures to preserve, sustain and strengthen the harmonious relationship between all communities.
  
- To condemn the repeated atrocities on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and take stringent action on the perpetrators of such crimes under the various laws and special acts enacted.

- To eradicate the dehumanizing practice of manual scavenging and other forms of undignified labour and ensure for the people engaged in this practice alternate forms of employment that assures a life of dignity and honour for them.
  
- To condemn the sexual abuse, molestation and violent attacks on women and to ensure prompt and firm action against the culprits by the law enforcement agencies as well as speedy prosecution of such cases under the criminal justice system.
  
- To ensure that all women enjoy the fruits of freedom, to pursue their social and economic development with equal opportunities, and to safeguard their right of movement in the public space at any time of the day or night.

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