

Welcome and DSDS 2012 theme presentation

By Dr R K Pachauri, Director General, TERI

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh; Your Excellency President of Finland, Ms Tarja Halonen; Your Excellency President of Kiribati, Mr Anote Tong; Your Excellency President of Seychelles, Mr James Alix Michel; Hon'ble Minister of New and Renewable Energy, Dr Farooq Abdullah; Hon'ble Minister of State (I/C) for Environment and Forests, Ms Jayanthi Natarajan; Hon'ble Chief Minister of N.C.T. of Delhi Ms Sheila Dikshit; Dr Arcot Ramachandran, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen! It is a deep honour for me to welcome you on this occasion, the 12th edition of the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit. We are very privileged to have the Hon'ble Prime Minister with us, because his presence signifies India's deep commitment to the objectives of sustainable development. Indeed, Sir, on the eve of New Year Day you had highlighted the challenges of energy security, ecological security, water security and protection of our forests. You also stated "As responsible citizens of the world we must pursue a pattern of development which reduces greenhouse gas emissions per unit of our GDP by about 20-25% by 2020 as our contribution to global ecological security."

May I also extend a special welcome to their excellencies Mr Festus Mogae, Former President of Botswana; Mr Bharrat Jagdeo, Former President of Guyana; Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, Former Prime Minister of Norway; Lord John L Prescott, Former Deputy Prime Minister of the U.K. and Mr Arnold Schwarzenegger, Former Governor of California.

The issue of the global commons has been part of global consciousness for half a century now. It was Garrett Hardin who lamented "the tragedy of the commons", as the inevitable outcome of prolonged and persistent gaps between private costs and benefits on the one hand and social costs and benefits on the other. Today, we should ask whether the world has really found a solution to this growing problem. The 1992 Rio Summit raised high expectations, particularly with agreement on the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Agenda-21, which represented a comprehensive plan of action to be undertaken at the global, national and local levels by organizations of the U.N. system, governments, and major groups in every area in which human impacts on the environment were highlighted. This agenda, along with the statement of principles for the sustainable management of forests was adopted by more than 178 countries at the Rio Summit. What have we achieved in implementing these?

We are now twenty years beyond Rio and 40 years after the historic U.N. Conference on the Human Environment which was held in Stockholm in June, 1972. That major event had only two heads of government participate, the Prime Minister of Sweden and India's Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, as opposed to 108 heads of state or heads of government who attended the Rio Summit.

During December 2011 we saw the conclusion of the 17th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, and yet the world continues with an increase in the emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs). The Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) brought out the fact that between 1970 and 2004 GHG emissions had increased by 70%. Growing emissions have led to warming of the climate system which is unequivocal, and it was also found that most of the increase in temperature which has taken place since the middle of the last century was very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic GHG concentrations, the phrase "very likely" signifying a probability of over 90%. The impacts of climate change are diverse and spread over a large number of sectors and a range of ecosystems. These include human health, agriculture, water resources, precipitation patterns and the problem of sea level rise. A recent "Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation" by the IPCC has come up with findings that show a definite increase in the frequency and intensity of heat waves as well as extreme precipitation events. Human society would have to adapt to these impacts, because the inertia in the system is such that even with very stringent mitigation the impacts of climate change will continue for quite some time. However, many impacts can be reduced, delayed or avoided by mitigation, and hence mitigation options merit serious consideration and action.

We in India face some major challenges as well as expanding opportunities. The mitigation of GHG emissions carry with it a vast range of co-benefits including higher energy security, health benefits due to lower levels of air pollution, higher agricultural yields and many others. We need to consider these co-benefits in devising a new development strategy which would be relevant for the 21st century. One of our biggest challenges in the future would be to ensure security of energy supply. This can only be achieved through improvements in energy efficiency as well as a move to sustainable sources of energy supply. Our transport sector, our buildings and much of our industry, particularly in the small and medium scale sector, are excellent candidates for improvement in energy efficiency. And all the opportunities we hold have high economic benefits, but these can only be achieved if we restructure our very fundamentals in terms of a

transport system which relies on greater use of public transport, and buildings which adhere to standards and benchmarks of efficiency, which TERI has developed and exhibited. We are grateful to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy for their support and partnership in the development of the GRIHA rating system, which is far more relevant than and superior to some U.S. based rating systems for buildings, even though GRIHA may not as yet carry the same glamour as that of an American Platinum rating. But this will change and government policy could bring about a substantial shift towards this significantly better system of rating.

Finally, India has to explore the opportunities inherent in greater dependence on biomass resources for energy, materials and fiber. We are a country with high quantities of biomass in the form of agricultural residue, great potential for producing larger quantities from our wastelands, and sustainable yields from our forests, if these were to be managed better. There is need for a goal oriented science and technology research programme by which biomass can be converted to useful fuels and material. Today we have the ability scientifically to replicate the processes by which nature converted biomass buried below the ground into fossil fuels over geological time scales. Second and third generation biofuels technology for instance can make such a conversion technically feasible and economically viable. I would like to submit for the consideration of the Hon'ble Prime Minister that TERI is willing to take the initiative in developing a focused plan of action and roadmap for a bright bio-economic future for India.

We believe that India can and should develop as a model of sustainable development and become a beacon light for the rest of the world. Gandhiji's belief "Be the change you want to see in the world", is perhaps more relevant today than it has been at any time in the past. The global commons can be protected only if there is a commitment on the part of nation states to realize the tragedy inherent for all of us if we do not carry out proper protection of these. We hope this Summit and the official Rio+20 event in June of this year will mark a watershed in perceptions and priorities by which we work collectively towards a more environmentally and ecologically secure future for coming generations.
