

PM's Speech at the Inauguration of the 10th Delhi Sustainable Development Summit

I am honoured to have this opportunity to address such a prestigious gathering of government leaders, civil society activists, academics and scientists from around the world. The Delhi Sustainable Development Summit celebrates its 10th anniversary today and with each passing year it has become an increasingly important event on the international environment and climate change calendar.

The Energy Research Institute, TERI, has, under the able and far-sighted leadership of Dr. R.K. Pachauri, earned well-deserved respect and international acclaim for its contributions to the global effort in meeting the twin challenges of energy security and climate change.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, this Summit takes place at an important juncture in the international deliberations aimed at forging a multilateral understanding on how to deal with climate change. Moving forward, we need to reflect on the lessons of what happened in Copenhagen.

I share the disappointment of many with the limited achievements of the discussions at Copenhagen. At the same time it is important to ensure that we can deliver what we promise. An ambitious agreement that is observed only in the breach will discredit the whole process. The Copenhagen Accord, which we fully support and will take forward, is a catalogue of voluntary commitments and not a negotiated set of legal obligations. Presumably the countries that have made the commitments willingly have assured themselves that they can be fulfilled. A modest accord that is fully implemented may be better than an ambitious one that falls seriously short of its targets. This is the lesson that was learnt with the Kyoto Protocol.

Secondly, the UNFCCC has to be the centerpiece of global cooperation on climate issues. The purpose of the Copenhagen Accord is to contribute to the negotiations on the Kyoto Protocol and on Long Term Cooperation. It is not a substitute but a complement to these core international agreements. There is much in the Copenhagen Accord that can bring consensus on the two-track negotiating process. For this to happen, this process itself has to recommence in right earnest, perhaps from March this year.

Thirdly, a successful international agreement will require a consensus in two crucial areas. The first is on the science of climate change. The second is the ethical framework for giving expression to the central UNFCCC principle of "common but differentiated responsibility".

Some aspects of the science that is reflected in the work of the IPCC have faced criticism. But this debate does not challenge the core projections of the IPCC about the impact of greenhouse gas accumulations on temperature, rainfall and sea level rise. Let me here assert that India has full confidence in the IPCC process and its leadership and will support it in every way that it can.

One of the Missions under our National Action Plan is on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change to promote high quality and focused research on various aspects of climate change.

We have established an Indian Network for Comprehensive Climate Change Assessment, a network of over 120 research institutes, which will bring out regular reports on the impacts of climate change on different sectors and different regions of the country. The first such assessment will be released in November this year. We seek international collaboration to make this network effective.

We are also establishing a National Institute of Himalayan Glaciology in Dehra Dun and look forward to international cooperation in this vital area.

However, even in the absence of unanimity of scientific opinion, many of the actions related to mitigation and adaptation are those we should be taking anyway because of their collateral benefits.

The lack of global consensus on burden sharing is an even greater barrier to securing an agreement. Industrialised countries need to recognise more clearly their historical role in the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. They should respond with bolder initiatives to contain their future emissions. I would also urge greater financial and technical assistance to developing countries both for adaptation measures to cope with the consequences of these emissions; and for mitigation to reduce their contribution to future emissions.

Developing countries also need to do their bit. I wish to assure this distinguished gathering that India will spare no effort in contributing to the success of the post-Copenhagen process. The least developed countries and small island states

deserve special attention due to their greater vulnerability to climate change. India will support all measures to assist them, both bilaterally as well as in the context of a global climate change regime.

We recently convened a meeting in New Delhi of the Ministers dealing with Climate Change from Brazil, China, South Africa and India. The aim of the meeting was to carry forward the positive and constructive role the four countries played at Copenhagen. We wish to contribute, together with our G-77 partners, to a comprehensive, balanced and above all equitable outcome in Mexico based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities.

We will therefore participate in the negotiations in a spirit of flexibility, acknowledging our responsibilities as citizens of the globe. It is in this spirit that India, and the other BASIC countries, conveyed our respective voluntary mitigation actions to the UNFCCC by January 31st. In our case it is our endeavour to reduce emissions intensity of GDP by 20-25% by 2020 on 2005 levels. We are most serious about fulfilling and perhaps even exceeding this target.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the case of developing countries, climate action has to be combined with their central developmental goals. In a poor country like India, where hope and deprivation co-exist, sustainable development requires that the needs of the present are given at least as much attention as the needs of the future.

Climate action that delays or makes more difficult the basic task of poverty eradication will be difficult to implement. That is why in our National Action Plan on Climate Change, we have given priority to those activities that mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and also deliver substantial collateral benefits by reducing poverty or improving local environmental quality and human health.

We recognise that we have to adopt a different model of growth to that followed by the industrialized countries. But a lot of effort is needed to operationalise the meaning and content of sustainable development. The Planning Commission of India has recently set up an Expert Group to prepare a strategy on a low carbon economy in India. The Group will have to work out a holistic approach that takes on board concerns of all stakeholders - industry, transportation, power, labour, micro and small industry and agriculture well in time before we embark on our Twelfth Five Year Plan from April, 2012.

India has already committed itself to a path of sustainable development based on a graduated shift to the extent possible from use of fossil fuels to renewable and clean energy, such as nuclear energy.

Within the ambit of our National Action Plan on Climate Change, India has already unveiled one of the world's most ambitious plans for promoting solar energy, targeting an installed capacity of 20,000 MW by the year 2022.

We will soon launch an ambitious National Mission on Enhanced Energy Efficiency that will put in place an innovative policy and regulatory regime to unlock the market for energy efficiency, estimated at over Rs. 74,000 crores or over US\$ 15 billion. It is expected that the initiative will lead to avoidance of capacity addition of nearly 20,000 MW and reduced carbon dioxide emissions of almost 99 million tones.

India has around 22% of its land area under forests. This is significant, given India's growing population and high population density and this sequesters around 10% of our annual greenhouse gas emissions. Our objective over the next decade would be to increase not just the quantity but the quality of forest cover, since about 40% is degraded forest with little tree canopy and cover. This will enable us to at least maintain this level of carbon sequestration even as we maintain an 8-9% annual rate of real GDP growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is becoming clear that the roots of the problem we face today are the current patterns of global production and consumption, which are not sustainable. We are living on an overdraft on Nature's resources and this is already threatening the ecological balance, which is the basis of our survival. It is my earnest hope that you will approach your deliberations over the next few days, mindful of the challenge we face, not as nations divided by frontiers, but as a world united as one humankind.

Thank you.