

CONFERENCE ON
CLIMATE CHANGE AND INDUSTRY: ISSUES AND
OPPORTUNITIES

Address by

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July 13, 2002
Chennai, 10.00 AM

Pleasantaries.....

I am delighted to be in Chennai on the occasion of this conference on "Climate Change: Issues and Opportunities", which we are jointly organizing with Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Tata Energy Research Institute. I take this opportunity to welcome the participants on behalf of the Ministry of Environment and Forests and my own. I am thankful to Hon'ble Union Minister of Environment and Forests Thiru T. R. Baalu for kindly agreeing to inaugurate this conference. You are all aware that this year in late October, India is hosting the 8th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention on Climate change. As a run up to that major event, we have planned a series of interactions of this nature across the country.

As would be noted from the subject of the Conference, the intent of this interaction is to discuss issues and opportunities in the context of Climate change - a subject, that has engaged and occupied center stage of the global concern and has emerged as an important environmental issue. The concern of global warming culminated in adoption of a multilateral convention on climate change, the objective of which is to stabilize greenhouse gas emission concentrations of anthropogenic origin at safer levels that would prevent interference with the climate system.

Scientists world over agree that there is a discernible human influence on climate systems. Evidences continue to accumulate. The levels of greenhouse gases have risen substantially due to combustion of fossil fuels mainly in the Energy, Industry and the Transport sectors.

A decade has passed since the countries of the world signed the Climate Change Convention as a testimony to their commitment for Global cooperation as well as making the planet Earth a safer place to live. The

Convention recognizes the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities to stabilize the greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere. It also recognizes, that the share of global greenhouse gas emissions originating in Developing countries will grow to meet their social and development needs.

Being a party to the Convention, there is an expectation to take Climate Change considerations in to the planning process to the extent possible. This implies promotion and global cooperation in the development, application, transfer and diffusion of technologies, practices and processes that control and contribute to stabilization of greenhouse gases - the objective of the Convention.

This is an area of interest to our industry.

Technology obviously holds the key to accelerated economic development. Identification, acquisition, development and promotion of cleaner technologies in different sectors, is therefore imperative. Energy efficiency improvement, Resource conservation and Pollution prevention through cleaner production are, indeed, the main themes of our economic reforms.

Competition in the market also contributes to the need for adoption of cleaner technologies so that our products could compete globally both on quality and price criteria. Our past performance indicates that we can not continue to rely on end-of-pipe treatment enforced through environmental legislations. There is a need to switch over to efficient production techniques. This underlines the need to catch up with the rest of the world through leapfrogging by adopting strategies in combination of indigenously developed technologies and judicious technology transfer. Cleaner technologies and improved management skills may be utilized in the new ventures without much difficulty and the present units require interventions through technology up gradation, renovation and modernization etc.

I am sure that the Indian Industry has taken initiatives for technology up gradation, which becomes more important in the light of rising greenhouse gas emissions. Further, these can be facilitated through exchange of information, know how and experience amongst the industrial community. In this context the Kyoto Protocol mechanisms are relevant for facilitating additional resource mobilization.

Let me mention that the Government of India, through various activities and programme, is addressing the objectives of the Convention, in spite of the fact that the Convention does not require India to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. At the national level, environmental protection and sustainable development have been addressed as key national priorities. Several Indian institutions are already working in various sectors with the help of funds made available primarily by the Government of India. These institutions have conducted many studies over the last several years, which provide an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions and identify potential options for GHG stabilization that may be pursued.

The Indian government, through its various institutions and resources, has taken steps to de-couple the Indian energy system from carbon in the long run. These include measures to substitute coal by low carbon intensive fuels like natural gas and carbon free sources like renewable energy. The latter measures are among the initial steps to de- couple the energy system from carbon in the long run. The double de- coupling, first of energy growth from economic growth and second of carbon from energy, demonstrates India's active commitment and response to the goals of the UNFCCC. The carbon emissions saved over the past decade from promotion of renewable energy and energy conservation initiatives amount to over 80 million ton. In the year 2000, some of the major initiatives have saved total annual carbon emissions of 14 million tons, which is over 5 percent of India's total carbon emissions.

Besides, numerous capacity building initiatives have been undertaken in India. A vital aspect of this process has been the participation by the central and state government agencies, research institutions, non- government organizations and industry. Government of India has also instituted consultative processes for climate change policies. Indian researchers have made significant contributions to international scientific assessments.

Let me note that our industry has been most responsive and has expressed a deep interest in the matters relating to Climate Change and have actively participated in the above programmes and initiatives. Their presence today confirms their commitment in this area.

It may not be out of place to mention here that towards fulfillment of obligations under the Convention regarding furnishing of information about the National Greenhouse Gas inventories, programmes, activities and initiatives which contribute to addressing the objectives of the Convention, the Ministry has mounted a comprehensive towards preparation of "India's Initial national Communication" to the Convention secretariat. The work programme is addressing to:

- Refinement of National greenhouse gas estimations
- Reduction of uncertainties in them and
- Assessment of vulnerable regions and sectors

A countrywide network of institutions has been specifically created to undertake this multidisciplinary work. We are visualizing this opportunity to enrich and enhance our experience in identifying constraints, gaps and related financial, technical and capacities in different sectors. You will have the opportunity to know more details about this activity in this seminar.

Let me now turn to impacts, vulnerability and adaptation due to Climate Change in the context of Industry. According the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change the Energy, Industry and Infrastructure would be susceptible to sudden changes, surprises, and increased frequency or intensity of extreme events.

These may include Agro industries, Energy demand, Renewable energy production, some transportation activities, and infrastructures such as the existing flood mitigation and transportation infrastructures located in vulnerable areas including coastal zones and mountainous regions.

To conclude, let me say that my effort this morning has been to touch upon some of the issues that are relevant to the industry, and I trust that, in this daylong deliberation they may receive consideration and also identify issue and opportunities.

Thank you.