

Delhi Sustainable Development Summit 2001

Poverty: the global challenge for governments, industry, scientists, and civil society

Organized by TERI, New Delhi, 7-9 February 2001

Online at <http://www.teriin.org/dsds>

Highlights . . .

From the Director, TERI . . .

The first DSDS (Delhi Sustainable Development Summit) ended on a positive note with an illuminating final keynote address by Dr Karan Singh, former cabinet minister and currently Member of Parliament, and a valedictory session in which the speakers were Mr I K Gujral, the Hon'ble former Prime Minister of India, H E Mr Ola Ullsten, the Hon'ble former Prime Minister of Sweden, and Mrs Sheila Dikshit, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Delhi. Mr Gujral emphasized the nexus between poverty and environmental degradation and traced the concerns on this subject from the Stockholm conference of 1972 in which he had participated as a cabinet minister from India. He felt that a multiplicity of agencies have to work together in addressing the challenge of poverty eradication and improving the lot of the poorest societies in the world. H E Mr Ola Ullsten provided an extremely valuable summary of issues covered in the DSDS and imperatives that need to be recognized in preparation for Rio + 10. Mrs Dikshit focused on Delhi being a microcosm of the complexities of managing growth, with due attention for environmental protection and meeting the needs of the poor.

I ended the Summit by emphasizing the need for a new ethic that should drive much higher financial

flows from the developed countries to the developing countries. Also highlighted were the imperatives in preparing for Rio + 10 taking into account the changes that have taken place globally since 1992. In particular, the roles of the corporate sector and civil society have changed substantially in this period. Finally, an announcement was made about the launch of a new programme of activity called IN-STEP (Integrating New and Sustainable Technologies for Elimination of Poverty), in which a major programme of technology innovation and dissemination will be undertaken at the grass-roots level by involving several partner institutions, particularly in rural areas of Asia, but also possibly in Africa. A detailed write-up on this enterprise will be sent to several participants for their comments and suggestions. A request was made to all the participants of the DSDS to send suggestions or advice that they may have for the organization of the next DSDS and the activities that TERI plans to launch as a follow-up of this event.


(R K Pachauri)

In brief . . .

Keynote address 6: Nobel Laureate Prof. Paul Crutzen

Prof. Paul Crutzen described the ozone hole as the most dramatic example of a human-induced change in the global atmospheric chemistry system. He highlighted the important role of the tropospheric ozone layer in the production of hydroxyl radicals, which are the main oxidizing agents and have a cleansing action on most gases. The tropics and subtropics act as the 'laundry place of the atmosphere' due to maximum hydroxyl concentrations in these regions. With increasing populations and industrial/agricultural activities in the developing world, the largest changes in atmospheric chemistry are expected to take place in these regions. Measurement of air pollution by satellites has indicated high levels of photochemical smog in these regions. Prof. Crutzen, therefore, made a plea for much bigger participation from the scientists of developing countries, especially India, in research on ozone layer depletion.

Plenary session 5: Financing Sustainable Development

Mr Ian Johnson highlighted the increasing importance of market-based instruments like pollution taxes in generating sufficient resources for sustainable development. He emphasized the need for creating and enforcing property rights to induce incentives for sustainable development at individual

and community level. Dr Andrew J Bennett and Mr C Ramachandran discussed the role of multilateral agencies in the context of ensuring that resources are utilized in the most efficient manner. Mr Nick Robins cogently brought out the potential of SRI (socially responsible investment) and the various issues surrounding it. He detailed the SRI initiatives that his firm, Henderson Global Investors, has taken worldwide to address the global challenge of poverty eradication with limited resources.

Dr E A S Sarma held that besides multilateral agencies and market mechanisms, subsidies and improved governance have a key role in funding development assistance. He contended that the poor should be given a platform to air their apprehensions.

Plenary session 6: Sustainable Agriculture, Food Security, and Knowledge for Rural Development

Prof. Lawrence S Bacow pointed out that judicious and timely intervention of alternative technologies can bridge the gap between demand and production in the face of increasing population. Free trade will abolish non-sustainable agricultural practices by relocating food production in those areas where good irrigation facilities exist. Mr Horacio E Navarrete elaborated Monsanto's association with small-holder farmers in developing countries towards sustainable

development. Dr Florence Wambugu said that the main challenge faced by most states in Africa is food productivity not keeping pace with population growth. She averred that this can be tackled by integrating conventional agriculture with new advances in plant biotechnology. Dr Vibha Dhawan highlighted various biotechnological initiatives taken by TERI, including use of renewable energy through biogas, solid waste management, containment of oil spills by using oil zipper containing microbial consortium, and employment of mycorrhizae biofertilizer in combination with fly ash.

Luncheon address: Mr Gilbert Parent

The chairperson, Mr S Sundar, said that environment security is a global force and depends on millions of interactions, transcending all borders.

According to Mr Parent, sustainable development has come to mean different things to different people, and has different meaning for developed and developing countries. Canada lays emphasis on integration of social, environmental, and ethical concepts and strong corporate and civil society participation. Also, trade and environment policies must be mutually supportive.

Canada recognizes the vital link between poverty reduction and sustainable development, especially in the context of developing countries. The Canadian International Development Agency focuses on poverty reduction in its regional strategies. He emphasized that education, primary health, nutrition, water supply, and sanitation are the key elements that will reduce poverty.

Mr Parent also said that poverty reduction, global security, and environmental security are complementary goals. Canada is looking at an integrated and holistic approach to poverty reduction and environment protection. In this, the participation of the civil society is important.

Plenary session 7: Energy for the Masses

The deliberations highlighted the growing gap among and within countries, regions, and population groups, exacerbated by inadequate and inefficient energy use. Biomass is the main source of energy for the rural poor. The present high reliance on fossil-fuel-based systems compounds the problem, as they are finite and contribute to environmental degradation.

Dr Hoesung Lee said provision of energy for the masses requires sustained economic growth in the short run, and sustained economic development in the long run, implying reductions in pollution intensity of output.

Mr Vikram Mehta commented that large-scale promotion of renewable energy technologies would continue to require government support/subsidies. This provoked much discussion. Dr A V del Rosario suggested giving such subsidies for a limited period of time. However, Dr Lee maintained that sustainability could not be achieved through subsidies. Dr Nebojsa Nakicenovic said alternative technologies would be viable only if substantial funds are made available for their development.

Dr Rosario said large investments are necessary to assure energy for the masses. Though rural electric cooperatives in the Philippines have been greatly successful, private sector funds are also necessary for rural electrification initiatives. However, a balance would have to be struck to ensure affordability at the consumer's end and cost recovery and attractive returns for the private sector.

Keynote address 7: Dr Karan Singh

Ambassador Farooq Sobhan emphasized the need to address the issue of sustainable development in the light of various interlinked factors such as population, poverty, illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, and proper governance. Dr Karan Singh said that there are two choices to development: sustainable or unsustainable, which involve moral, ethical, and technological issues. The very foundations of life, namely air, water, and land, are already polluted and this has imperilled the future of the human race. Referring to the Vedic reverence for nature, he said that divinity is inherent in natural

environment. He called for a commitment to sustain and save the environment, focusing on renewable sources of energy, technological breakthroughs, and massive educational campaigns for spreading awareness about energy conservation and environmental protection. The onus of responsibility to protect the environment lies on the younger generation, which should spread the basic message of survival. Sustainable development required massive cooperation from all sections of society. Dr Singh concluded by pointing out the significance of empowering women.

Valedictory session: Mr I K Gujral, Mrs Sheila Dikshit, H E Mr Ola Ullsten, and Dr R K Pachauri

Mr I K Gujral, the Hon'ble former Prime Minister of India, began by recalling the Stockholm conference in 1972 and the trend already visible then, namely the developed world retaining its non-polluting industries and moving its polluting industries to the developing world. In this context, Mr Gujral made it clear that pollution needs to be eliminated, not merely moved. Sustainability, yes, but for whom and by whom are critical questions. Mr Gujral then briefly summarized the several issues covered during the Summit. He mentioned that poverty is a polluter but so is affluence, and that India has to contend with both.

Mrs Sheila Dikshit, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Delhi, began with a few salient statistics and said that Delhi is a microcosm of the country. Tracing Delhi's development, particularly its industrial development and the opportunities it offers, Mrs Dikshit wondered whether India's development can match the growth of its population. Talking of India's gifted human resources in IT (information technology) seeking greener pastures elsewhere, she questioned whether this exodus was sustainable, particularly when one takes into account the money spent by the state on the education of these IT professionals. In conclusion, she mentioned Bhutan as an example of a country that sets a high value on the sense of well-being enjoyed by its populace and wondered whether development means economic or material development alone—it ought to be the development of the whole human being individually and collectively as a family, a community, a nation, and the whole world.

H E Mr Ola Ullsten, the Hon'ble former Prime Minister of Sweden, began by complimenting the Summit for its clarity and frankness. He highlighted the many crucial pieces of truth emerged during the Summit and suggested that we recommend what he called 'recognitions' to the world leaders when they meet in South Africa next year for another summit on sustainable development.

Dr R K Pachauri, Director, TERI, began by imploring the governments and civil society in the developing countries to take a more responsible approach to development. He maintained that removal of poverty is central to sustainable development and warned that failure to ratify the Kyoto Protocol will make it hard to achieve international understanding. He also announced the imminent launch of a major initiative titled INSTEP (Integrating New and Sustainable Technologies to Eliminate Poverty) that seeks to raise 10 million dollars to harness technology to alleviate poverty, particularly rural poverty, at the grass-roots level.

As they said it . . .

'When a calamity of the magnitude of the Gujarat earthquake strikes, the worst affected are the poor. It is far easier to rescue them than to rehabilitate them.'

. . . Mr I K Gujral,
Hon'ble former Prime Minister of India

'Rich or poor, we live in the same world. But it seems that we are living on different planets.'

. . . H E Mr Ola Ullsten,
Hon'ble former Prime Minister of Sweden