



## PRESS RELEASE

### 'Make rainwater harvesting mandatory across India'

**Chennai: December 1, 2014:** The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) today organized a Regional Dialogue titled, '**Towards Sustainable Cities**'. The Dialogue was organized in the run up to TERI's annual flagship event, the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS), which will be held in New Delhi from February 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> 2015. The Summit completes 15 years next year. To celebrate this landmark edition, a series of Regional Dialogues are being hosted in the Indian cities of Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru. The first Dialogue was held in Bengaluru, which mapped smart city concepts and practices to ensure sustainable habitats, while the Chennai Dialogue deliberated on access to basic facilities, including clean drinking water and sanitation.

The DSDS Dialogues comes in the wake of the NDA government announcing 100 Smart Cities for India and the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

The 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the Summit will witness an array of illustrious speakers including: **HE Mr Ban Ki-Moon**, Secretary General, United Nations; **Mr Arnold Schwarzenegger**, Founding Chair, R20 - Regions of Climate Change & Former Governor, California; **Mr Paul Polman**, Chief Executive Officer, Unilever; **Prof Jeffrey D Sachs**, Director, Earth Institute, & Special Advisor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, **Dr Henrik O. Madsen**, Group President and CEO, DNV-GL among others.

At the Dialogue, top experts deliberated on scaling up drinking water and sanitation in Tamil Nadu, and ways to ensure equitable access and decentralized distribution system for clean water and sanitation systems. They also deliberated on the key drivers of sustainable solutions and showcased some of the best practices in rural sustainable sanitation and water supply.

Delivering the Welcome Address, **Dr Annapurna Vancheswaran, Director, Sustainable Development Outreach**, said *“DSDS over the years has become the foremost platform on Sustainable Development with emphasis on the challenge and opportunities in emerging economies and the low lying states that are vulnerable to the vagaries of global economy and climate change. The regional dialogue initiated in the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the Summit is an effort to include sub-national representation in the Summit deliberations”*

Speaking at the event, **Dr Prodipto Ghosh, Distinguished Fellow, TERI**, said *“Assured supply of clean drinking water, and ensuring safe sanitation is a major policy concern in Tamil Nadu. The Regional Dialogue discussed the scale of the problem, the social linkages, and feasible technology and policy solutions”*.

**Dr B Chandramohan, IAS, Managing Director, Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board** said *“The tripod of water sustainability in Chennai city depends on waste water reuse, rain water harvesting, and desalination“*.

**Dr P Kuganatham, City Health Officer, Chennai Corporation (Retd.), MBBS, DPH, DTM & H (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK) W.H.O Fellow- MPH (John Hopkins, U.S.A)** said *“Public health has to be taken as first priority to develop smart cities. The smart city development is not achievable unless we have a national agenda to revamp the slums with modernity instead of removing them with people”*.

**Mr Mahesh Nathan, Head, Natural Resources Management, World Vision** said *“Every child deserves clean drinking water and World Vision is moving rapidly towards this target. Our approach to Smart City should be inclusive and build resilience in the communities we work’*.

## **1- CHALLENGES FOR CHENNAI IN BECOMING A SMART CITY:**

**A:-INCREASING POPULATION:** Chennai, fast developing as a top IT hub, faces the challenge of increasing urban population. This increase has led to poor water and electricity supply, lack of social infrastructure, lack of access to toilets and proliferation of slums owing to lack of affordable housing areas.

**B: SCARCE WATER RESOURCES:** Groundwater tables have also dropped significantly, and in many parts of the city, water sources have completely dried up. Farmers have become heavily indebted due to heavy investment on wells. The existing surface water bodies remain neglected or encroached upon or polluted. This has adversely affected overall health and agricultural activities, resulting in a steep decline in agricultural income. Unemployment has now emerged as a serious problem in the state.

## **2- OPPORTUNITY FOR CHENNAI IN BECOMING A SMART CITY**

**A-WATER CONVERSATION:** To bridge the gap between demand and supply of drinking water for Chennai city, the Chennai Metro Water has initiated several measures for water

conservation, equitable distribution and reducing leakages. Indiscriminate extraction and exploitation of groundwater is being tackled, while groundwater recharge through rooftop rainwater harvesting is helping improve the water situation.

**B- MANDATORY RAINWATER HARVESTING:** The Chennai Metro Water has made it mandatory to install rainwater harvesting structures to recharge groundwater. Until now, it has been installed in 10,000 buildings every year in the city. The Chennai Metro Water has undertaken several communication strategies, including distributing pamphlets to the public detailing different methods of rainwater harvesting structures suitable for different soil types existing in the city, and urging all building owners to clean silt deposits in their rainwater harvesting structures to boost levels. Drinking water supply sources in Chennai are dependent on the monsoon and the city experiences frequent water shortages. The government has set up sea water reverse osmosis desalination plants and external product water conveyance facilities. Many more desalination plants are on the anvil in the city.

**C-DECENTRALISED SOURCING AND AVAILABILITY OF DRINKING WATER:** In Chennai, the decentralized sourcing and availability of drinking water has led to a paradigm shift from a system wholly controlled by engineers and the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, to a level of co-management with various stakeholders, including common citizens. Providing such services with people's participation is a model for all large urban cities to consider while planning and managing drinking water systems. Thus, Chennai serves as a precedent and a model for other cities suffering from water scarcity.

Representatives from over 20 top corporate and a number of key senior officials, academicians and citizens participated in the Chennai Dialogue, which evoked an overwhelming response from various stakeholders.

### **A sustainable opportunity**

The deliberations at the Chennai Regional Dialogue will provide intellectual inputs to the DSDD 2015. This milestone 15th edition of the Summit assumes greater significance as the United Nations is in the process of finalizing the Sustainable Development Agenda post-2015. It also comes in the wake of the findings of latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which has presented a grim picture for ecosystems, and poor infrastructure planning and unsustainable systems can aggravate the damage to critical utilities during natural calamities. The DSDD 2015, to be held in New Delhi from February 5 to 7, would present a unique and timely opportunity to discuss "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Dealing with Climate Change", which is the theme this time. To register, click here: <http://dsdd.teriin.org/2015/registration.php>

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