

Text of PM's address at the inauguration of World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS 2018)

Prime Minister's Office

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Distinguished dignitaries on the dais,

Guests from India and abroad,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very happy to be here at the inauguration of the World Sustainable Development Summit. To those joining us from abroad: Welcome to India. Welcome to Delhi.

On the side lines of the Summit, I hope you shall have some time to see the history and splendor of this city. This summit is a re-inforcement of India's commitment to a sustainable planet, for ourselves and for future generations.

As a nation, we are proud of our long history and tradition of harmonious co-existence between man and nature. Respect for nature is an integral part of our value system.

Our traditional practices contribute to a sustainable lifestyle. Our goal is to be able to live up to our ancient texts which say, "Keep pure For the Earth is our Mother And we are her children".

One of the most ancient scriptures, the Atharva Veda, spells out

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This is the ideal we seek to live through our actions. We believe that all resources and all wealth belongs to Nature and the Almighty. We are just the trustees or managers of this wealth. Mahatma Gandhi too, advocated this trusteeship philosophy.

Recently, National Geographic's Greendex Report of 2014 which assesses the environmental sustainability of consumer choice, ranked India at the top for its greenest consumption pattern. Over the years, the World Sustainable Development Summit has spread consciousness about our actions to preserve the purity of Mother Earth to all parts of the world.

This common desire was on display at COP-21 in Paris in 2015. Nations took a stand to come together and work towards the common cause of sustaining our planet. As the world committed to bring about change, so did we. While the world was discussing 'Inconvenient Truth', we translated it into 'Convenient Action'. India believes in growth but is also committed to protecting the environment.

Friends, it was with this thought that India, along with France, initiated the International Solar Alliance. It already has 121 members. It is perhaps, the single most important global achievement after Paris. As part of the Nationally Determined Contributions, India committed to reducing 33 to 35 percent of emission intensity of its GDP during 2005 to 2030.

Our goal of creating a carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030 had once seemed difficult to many. Yet we continue our steady progression that path. According to the UNEP Gap Report, India is on track to meet its Copenhagen Pledge of reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP by 20 to 25 percent over 2005 levels by 2020.

We are also on track to meet the 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution. The UN Sustainable Development Goals put us on the path of equality, equity and climate justice. While we are doing everything that is required of us, we expect that others also join in to fulfil their commitments based on Common but Differentiated Responsibility and equity.

We must also stress on climate justice for all vulnerable populations. We in India are focused on Ease of living – through Good Governance, Sustainable Livelihood and through Cleaner Environment. The campaign for clean India has moved from the streets of Delhi to every nook and corner of the country. Cleanliness leads to better hygiene, better health, better working conditions and there-by better income and life.

We have also launched a massive campaign to ensure that our farmers convert agricultural waste to valuable nutrients, instead of burning them.

We are also happy to host the 2018 World Environment Day to highlight our commitment and our continuing partnership to make the world a cleaner place.

We also recognize the need to tackle the issue of water availability, which is becoming a major challenge. That is why we have introduced the massive Namami Gange initiative. This programme, which has already started giving results, will soon revive the Ganga, our most precious river.

Our country is primarily agrarian. Continued availability of water for agriculture is of importance. The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana has been launched to ensure that no farm goes without water. Our motto is 'More crop, per drop.'

India has a fairly decent report card on bio-diversity conservation. With only 2.4 percent of the world's land area, India harbours 7-8 percent of the recorded species diversity, while supporting nearly 18 percent of human population.

India has gained international recognition for 10 out of its 18 Biosphere Reserves under UNESCO's Man and Biosphere programme. This is a testimony that our development is green and our wildlife is robust.

Friends,

India has always believed in making the benefits of good governance reach everyone.

Our mission of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas is an extension of this philosophy. Through this

philosophy, we are ensuring that some of our most deprived areas experience social and economic progression par with others.

In this day and age, access to electricity and clean cooking solutions are basics that every person must be provided with. These form the core of any country's economic development.

Yet, there are many in India and outside who are struggling in the absence of these solutions. People are forced to use un-healthy cooking techniques that cause indoor air pollution. I have been told that the smoke in a rural kitchen resulting from this is a serious health hazard. Yet, few talk about it. Keeping this in view we have launched two far-reaching initiatives- Ujjwala and Saubhagya. From the time that they were launched, these schemes have already impacted the lives of millions. With these twin programmes, the time when mothers would fetch dry wood from forests or prepare cow dung cakes, to feed their families will be gone soon. Soon too, the images of traditional firewood stoves will only remain a picture in our social history texts.

Similarly, through Saubhagya Scheme, we are working towards electrifying every

household in this country, mostly by the end of this year. We recognize that only a healthy nation can lead the process of development. Keeping this in mind, we have launched the world's largest government funded health scheme. The programme will support hundred million poor families.

Our 'Housing for All' and 'Power for All' initiatives also stem from this same agenda of providing the basic amenities of life to those who cannot afford them.

Friends!

You know that India is one sixth of the global community. Our development needs are enormous. Our poverty or prosperity will have direct impact on the global poverty or prosperity. People in India have waited too long for access to modern amenities and means of development.

We have committed to complete this task sooner than anticipated. However, we have also said that we will do all this in a cleaner and greener way. To give you just a few examples. We are a young Nation. To give employment to our youth, we have decided to make India a global manufacturing hub. We have launched the Make in India campaign for this. However, at the same time, we are insisting on Zero defect and zero effect manufacturing.

As the world's fastest growing major economy, our energy needs are immense. However, we have planned to draw One 175 Giga-Watts of energy from renewable sources by 2022. This includes 100 Giga-Watts from Solar Energy and another 75 Giga-Watts from Wind and other sources. We have added more than 14 Giga-Watts to solar energy generation which was just about three Giga-Watts three years back.

With this, we are already the fifth largest producer of solar energy in the world. Not only this, we are also the sixth largest producer of renewable energy.

With growing urbanization our transportation needs are growing too. But we are focusing on mass transportation systems especially metro rail systems. Even for cargo movement to long distances, we have started working on national water-way systems. Each of our states is preparing an action plan against climate change.

This will ensure that while we are working towards conserving our environment, we also

safe-guard our most vulnerable areas. One of our largest states, Maharashtra, has already adopted a plan of its own in this direction. We intend to achieve each of our sustainable development objectives on our own, but collaboration remains the key.

Collaboration between governments, between industries, and between people. The developed world can help us achieve them faster.

Successful climate action needs access to financial resources and technology. Technology can help countries like India develop sustainably and enable the poor to benefit from it.

Friends.

We are here today to act upon the belief that we as humans can make a difference to this planet. We need to understand that this planet, our Mother Earth, is one. And so, we should rise above our trivial differences of race, religion, and power, and act as one to save her.

With our deep rooted philosophy of co-existence with nature and co-existence with each other, we invite you to join us in the journey of making this planet a more safe and sustainable place.

I wish the World Sustainable Development Summit a great success.

Thank You

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