

UNPARALLELED COLLABORATION NEEDED FROM ALL NATIONS TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: VICE PRESIDENT

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

Vice President's Secretariat

Unparalleled collaboration needed from all nations to ensure sustainable development: Vice President

India's traditional practices reflected a sustainable lifestyle;

International Solar Alliance is India's most decisive step towards developing clean energy;

Encourage cycling in a big way;

Promote biotechnology and nano-technology for sustainable agriculture

Inaugurates World Sustainable Development Summit 2019

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Expressing his concern over the unprecedented scale of environmental degradation and its drastic consequences, the Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu called upon all nations to collaborate and cooperate in an equally unparalleled manner to ensure sustainable development.

He said that inclusive development was central to sustainable development. It also encompasses sustainable agriculture; sustainable mobility solutions; sustainable urbanization; sustainable energy security and clean energy; sustainable waste management; sustainable efforts in wildlife conservation and sustainable green innovations.

Addressing the World Sustainable Development Summit 2019, organized by The Energy and Resources Institute – TERI, here today, Shri Naidu said that India's traditional practices reflected a sustainable lifestyle and the Vedic philosophy of India always emphasized the undeniable connection that human beings share with nature.

The Vice President said that every individual must contribute to sustainable development, whether by turning the ignition off at long traffic stops or by recycling and composting or by cycling to work in congested cities.

Emphasizing the importance of judicious use of resources to save them for future generations, Shri Naidu said that one must realize that we are not inheritors but merely trustees of this earth.. It is our prime responsibility to pass it on to posterity in its pristine glory, he added.

The Vice President quoted the ancient Indian adage - "Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah". If you promote righteousness, it will protect you and if you protect the nature, it will protect you and nourish, if we don't, we run the risk of perishing, he added. Shri Naidu further said that the earth is our mother and humanity should collectively rise above our trivial differences of race, religion, and power, and act in unison to save her.

Pointing out that the immediate impacts of climate change were felt by developing countries, because of higher dependence on climatic variables, Shri Naidu said that everyone must join hands to minimize the impact of climate change.

The Vice President lauded the efforts of government for initiating efforts to create International Solar Alliance with France for promoting clean energy. He said that India was on the course to achieving 175 GW renewable energy target and 40% of India's electricity generation is set to be from non fossil fuels, by 2022. India is committed to reducing 33 to 35 percent of emission intensity of its GDP during 2005 to 2030 in tune with its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), he added.

The Vice President said that there was an urgent need to make use of the endless possibilities of biotechnology and nano technology to develop a range of green products including nano-fertilisers to attain sustainability in agriculture.

Saying that working with farmers to increase awareness on climate change was crucial, he also stressed upon the need to move towards more efficient systems of irrigation with 'more crop per drop' as a mantra. Greater thrust has to be placed on organic farming and on the use of natural means of pest control, he added.

The Vice President highlighted the need to check distress migration from rural areas and said that cities must be empowered through policy mandates, institutional and financial support and legal provisions to substantially improve the quality of lives of the urban poor.

Shri Naidu said that there was a need to build efficient, productive, equitable, smarter, more responsive and resilient cities and green habitats in keeping with Sustainable Development Goals which calls upon Governments to make cities and settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Saying that we must find sustainable ways of disposing waste, especially the growing pile of urban, non biodegradable waste which pollute waterways and oceans, the Vice President tasked experts to fully explore India's 'waste to wealth' potential and emphasize upon the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle.

The Vice President said that India is amongst the few countries of the world where forests are growing in spite of exponentially rising population and livestock pressures and India's forests act as a net carbon sink. India has set a target of raising its existing 21.54% forest cover to 33% of the total geographical area through aggressive forestation drives, he added.

The Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, the former President of Sri Lanka, Mrs. Chandrika Kumartunga, the former President of Mauritius, Mr. Cassam Uteem, the Minister of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, Nepal, Dr. Barsaman Pun, the Deputy Minister of Foreign

Affairs, Norway, Ms. Marianne Hagen, the India Country Director, The World Bank, Mr. Junaid Kamal Ahmad, the Chairman, TERI, Shri Nitin Desai, the Director General, TERI, Dr. Ajay Mathur and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"It is indeed a pleasure to be here at the inauguration of the World Sustainable Development Summit. I welcome the delegates who have come to join us today from different parts of the globe.

I am happy to note that over the past 18 years, the World Sustainable Development Summit has emerged as a credible institution, a powerful meeting point of the world's leading experts on sustainable development.

Platforms like the WSDS play a crucial role in exchanging information, knowledge, experiences, lessons learnt and best practices from across the globe.

They forge new partnerships, lead to synthesis of new ideas and bring people and nations together, inspiring them to work as a team to achieve the common goal.

And let me emphasize that Sustainable development is indeed a common goal for all world nations, given the unprecedented scale of environmental degradation and its drastic consequences that we have been witnessing over the last few decades.

With the realization that the impacts of climate change are borderless and that our fates are deeply inter-linked, we must explore an equally unprecedented degree of collaboration and cooperation.

Dear Sisters and brothers,

The Vedic philosophy of India has always emphasized the undeniable connection that human beings share with nature.

Our traditional practices reflect a sustainable lifestyle.

Vedic philosophy considers the earth as the mother and all life forms as her children.

The Mahabharata, Ramayana, Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and the Puranas contain some of the earliest messages on ecological balance.

This deep respect and gratitude felt towards nature is reflected in India's relentless efforts to accelerate energy transitions, protect nature and achieve sustainability.

It is indeed worrying to see studies that speak of troubling changes in global climate and precipitation patterns.

There has been an increase in the number of climate related disasters such as droughts and floods in the recent years in addition to a general rise in global temperature.

Climate change and global warming are real and imminent. They threaten the lives and livelihoods of billions of people and upset the delicate balance of nature.

It is in recognition of this fact that India is trying its best to include the paradigm of sustainability and environmental conservation in each and every one of its development endeavours.

India, along with France, initiated the International Solar Alliance which already has one hundred and twenty one members. The alliance is perhaps the most decisive step taken by any world nation towards developing clean energy.

India is committed to reducing 33 to 35 percent of emission intensity of its GDP during 2005 to 2030 in tune with its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

India on the course to achieving 175 GW renewable energy target and 40% of India's electricity generation is set to be from non fossil fuels, by 2022.

India is amongst the few countries of the world where forests are growing in spite of exponentially rising population and livestock pressures.

India's forests act as a net carbon sink. India has set a target of raising its existing 21.54% forest cover to 33% of the total geographical area through aggressive forestation drives.

Sustainable development is **inclusive development**.

Let us not forget that the more immediate impacts of climate change are felt by developing countries, because of higher dependence on climatic variables, especially when it comes to agriculture, and their limited capacities to adapt.

The marginalized and vulnerable sections of the world population are highly susceptible to climate-induced tragedies.

Therefore, in pursuance of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, granting these groups of people climate justice must be one of our primary goals.

Dear sisters and brothers,

Sustainable development includes **sustainable agriculture**.

India is focussing on this aspect very sharply.

Inconsiderate use of ground water for irrigation has led to drying up of aquifers. Reckless use of pesticides has degraded soil quality, polluted groundwater and has destroyed biodiversity, threatening our food security.

There is a need to make use of the endless possibilities of biotechnology and nano technology to develop a range of green products including nano-fertilisers.

We should move towards more efficient systems of irrigation with 'more crop per drop' as our mantra. Greater thrust has to be placed on organic farming and on the use of natural means of pest control.

Sustainable development means **sustainable mobility solutions**.

India's burgeoning urban spaces have transport requirements that are rising exponentially with each passing day.

India needs sustainable, inclusive, low carbon mobility solutions. We have to focus upon expanding our Mass Rapid Transit Systems like the metro rail network and promote the ease of use of green vehicles.

Sustainable development means **sustainable urbanization**.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates that by the end of 2050, India is expected to be the most populous country with roughly 1.7 billion inhabitants.

More than 60% of this population is expected to reside in India's urban centres by 2050.

Hence there is a need to build efficient, productive, equitable, smarter, more responsive and resilient cities and green habitats in keeping with SDG 11 which calls upon Governments to make cities and settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

We need to check distress migration from rural areas and substantially improve the quality of lives of the urban poor.

One of the key enablers in this process would be to empower cities through policy mandates, institutional and financial support and legal provisions.

Enhancing private sector participation and capacity building can go a long way in charting a sustainable urbanization pathway for India.

Sustainable development means **energy security and clean energy**.

As the world's fastest growing major economy, our energy needs are immense.

More than 80% of India's fuel needs are met by imports. This volatility and tendency for fluctuation in international crude oil prices threatens India's energy security.

We are already the fifth largest producer of solar energy in the world.

We have to continually improve our home grown, renewable energy capacity through constant research, innovation and technology up gradation.

Sustainable development means sustainable **waste management**.

We must find sustainable ways of disposing our waste, especially the growing pile of urban, non biodegradable waste which pollutes waterways and oceans.

We must fully explore our 'waste to wealth' potential and emphasize upon the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle.

Sustainable development means determined efforts at **wildlife conservation**.

India has gained global recognition for being home to eleven Biosphere reserves under UNESCO's Man and Biosphere programme.

As habitat loss and pollution affect many species of around the globe, pushing them to extinction, we must renew our efforts to conserve our wildlife.

Sustainable development means **green innovations**.

From solar panels to LED bulbs to windmills to sanitation that does not pollute our waterways, there is no dearth of opportunities to explore greener development.

But any green innovation must enable stakeholders to quickly overcome the higher first costs. It is important to explore options to bring down this high initial cost in the short term.

India has already achieved a number of milestones in sustainability.

By October this year, the Swachh Bharat Mission of cleanliness and sanitation will have saved over the lives of over 3 lakh children across the country.

The Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA), the world's largest domestic lighting scheme has successfully mitigated over Rs. 16,000 Crore in energy costs, while avoiding emissions of 3.4 Crore tons of CO₂.

Environmental conservation need not always happen through projects of large scale and scope.

Every single one of us can contribute to sustainable development, whether it be by turning the ignition off at long traffic stops or by recycling and composting or by cycling to work in congested cities.

Let our Diwalis be free of smoke and our Holis, of toxic, polluting colours.

It is the accumulation of such small actions of ours that will lend the much needed momentum to India's quest for sustainability.

Dear Sisters and brothers,

To be truly 'sustainable', the investments we make in our infrastructure and resources must be designed to be durable and resilient.

We want technologies, processes, and practices that, once implemented, continue to reap environmental dividends in the long run.

For this, we need technology and financing. While India does intend to reach each of our sustainable development objectives on our own, collaborations with the developed world can help us achieve them faster.

The more judiciously we consume resources, the more we save for our future generations.

We are not inheritors but merely trustees of this earth and everything in it. It is our prime responsibility to pass it on to posterity in its pristine glory.

I also call upon international organizations and the civil society to incorporate the aspect of sustainability in every single one of their discussions, deliberations and action plans for the future.

As I said, the earth is our mother and humanity should collectively rise above our trivial differences of race, religion, and power, and act in unison to save her.

As the ancient Indian adage goes “Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah”. If you promote righteousness, it will protect you.” If you protect nature, it will protect you and nourish. If we don’t, we run the risk of perishing. I hope the world community will have the wisdom, commitment and ‘will to act’ to protect nature and humanity’s future.

I wish the World Sustainable Development Summit and all its participants all the very best.

I look forward to witnessing how your deliberations and strategies can contribute to enhance India’s agenda of sustainability.

Jai Hind!”

AKT/BK/MS/RK

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