

PRESS RELEASE

Indian event at Cancun re-emphasises importance of equity

India hosted a major event at the sidelines of the UN Climate Change Conference at Cancun, where the critical issue of equity and equitable access to carbon space was emphasised. Addressing the meeting, India's Minister for Environment and Forests and Head of Delegation, Sh Jairam Ramesh noted: "Equity is key to the climate change negotiations. In the context of the 2 deg C global goal, the issue of equitable access becomes even more important. The phrase equitable access is not the right to pollute, but the right to sustainable development. We need to bring the excellent academic work on the subject into the mainstream of our negotiations."

Mr. Jairam Ramesh personally chaired the side event that had presentations by Prof. T. Jayaraman, Tata Inst. Of Social Sciences, India, Mr. Martin Khor, Executive Dir., South Centre, Geneva and Dr. Harald, ERC & Univ. Of Cape Town, South Africa. On the role of developing countries he noted that they have an imperative to develop rapidly and therefore cannot take on commitments that would impede their development.

The BASIC Ministerial meetings since the Cape Town meeting in early 2010 have recognized the importance of the equitable access to atmospheric space that is implied by the acceptance of limits on global temperature rise. Most recently at Tianjin the Ministers of the BASIC countries reiterated that "equitable access to sustainable development will be the core of and foundation for any climate change agreement and that this will be the prerequisite for setting up any global emission target."

In his presentation Prof. T. Jayaraman noted that recent advances in climate science had made a clear scientific case for considering global GHG emission targets in terms of a global carbon budget. The developed nations had grossly overoccupied the available space, since their emissions since 1850 amounted to almost 74% of the total carbon stock due to fossil fuels in the atmosphere. In answer to a question he noted that even accounting for emissions only from 1970, the developed countries were still responsible for more than 65% of total carbon stock in the atmosphere. But since the future budget for the world was only 300 Gigatons of carbon from 2010 to 2050, most developing countries would not be able to attain even 50% of their fair share of carbon space in terms of per capita accumulated stock of emissions. Developed countries need to cut emissions immediately and sharply and compensate developing countries through finance and technology transfer for their deficit in carbon space.

In his presentation, Mr. Martin Khor, Director, South centre, Geneva, noted that equitable access was crucial because carbon space was development space. He recalled the offer at Copenhagen of the developing countries to reduce emissions by 2050 to 80% of 1990 levels within a global reduction of 50% and pointed out that it did not give enough development space to developing countries. He emphasized that any fair and successful deal has to be environmentally ambitious, equitable and economically fair.

Dr. Harald Winkler pointed out that equity was critical to giving the climate negotiations a sense of direction. However he emphasized that it was important to take into account equity in all aspects and not a reductionist view equity. He pointed out that the question of how critical carbon budgets are should be studied. In response to a question, Dr. Winkler agreed that the atmosphere was a global commons and that the climate question was one of finding the right means of commons resource management.