

Workshop on Equity and Climate Change

New Delhi, Hotel Ashok, April 12, 2012

Inaugural Address by Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan, Minister for Environment & Forests

Dear Delegates, Invitees, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first welcome all of you to Delhi and thank the delegates from various countries who have come to Delhi to participate in this workshop on our request. I hope you will find Delhi comfortable although the weather has started warming up.

This workshop is a collaborative effort of all of us. All of us are stakeholders in the global negotiations on climate change and it is in our interest to build consensus on issues that are critical to the negotiations in future. I am, therefore, particularly thankful to all of you to make time and come to Delhi.

We have kept the format of this meeting as a workshop. It is not intended to be a conference but an interactive session where all of you will contribute to the discussions and respond to the issues raised.

Equity is one of the central issues in climate change negotiations. It is one of the key principles of the Convention. Its importance has gone up further after the negotiations at Durban.

There is no dearth of references to 'equity' and the related principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities' in the Climate Change Convention and the decisions of the COP.

But, now a time has come when we need a definition of the inter-relationship between the notions of equity and 'CBDR', and the nature of the obligations they entail.

At Cancun, the principles of equity and CBDR were mentioned in several decisions. The term of equitable access to sustainable development introduced in Durban captures the notion of equity in some way but not fully. In fact, the term figures in the context of global peaking of emissions and not of actions or responsibilities of the Parties.

We have tried to evolve a coordinated view on this matter by consultations amongst some of us. But, for building an arrangement that fulfils the objectives of the Convention and meets the emerging challenges, we need a greater degree of clarity and definition in our approach.

As we approach the latter half of the year, we should consider the fact that several elements of Bali Action Plan are as yet unresolved and unimplemented. Equity is clearly one of such unresolved issues.

I am glad that the matter received some attention when equity was introduced on the agenda of the CoP-17 with support of several countries. At Durban, it was agreed to have a workshop on this subject in the next meeting in Bonn. However, a workshop should not be an end in itself.

The workshop in Bonn should feed into the negotiations and help us devise a strategy that can protect the interest of the developing countries in general and sustainable growth in particular.

The importance of addressing this unresolved issue is even more evident when we look at the challenge of negotiations that will begin under the Durban Platform.

Under the Durban Platform, a process has been launched that will result in a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention. Under the Durban Platform, we have to put in place appropriate arrangements for the post 2020 period and also raise ambition to meet the global goal of climate stabilization. As the outcomes have to be reached under the Convention, the principles and provisions of the Convention have to apply. However, the manner in which this will be done needs to be clearly articulated.

Since we will be discussing the structure of the Durban Platform at the next meeting in Bonn, it is time that we are able to define the principle of equity that should act as the anchor of the future arrangements.

I am aware that this exercise requires a high degree of common analytical approach. Several of our scientists and experts have been engaged in exploring how this can be realised in practice.

There can be more than one approach to realising equity in practice. Given the variety of the needs and the particular circumstances of various developing countries, some effort would be required to ensure

that no developing country is particularly disadvantaged in any potential scheme of realising equity.

Many of us have recently made our submission on how we can increase the level of ambition in the global efforts to mitigate climate change. Several of us have emphasized that we are taking ambitious voluntary actions to reduce emissions according to our national priorities. For many of us, this is a reasonable measure of equity in global efforts.

We need, therefore, your views and guidance in deciding on an effective, scientifically consistent and socially and economically relevant definition of equity that would serve our interests even while enabling us to meet our international obligations under the Convention.

We hope that this workshop will help us take these discussions to a wider audience and a serious engagement will emerge through interaction with interlocutors from differing viewpoints. The exchange of scholarly and informed opinion in workshops such as this is essential to bridge the many gaps in understanding that stand in the way of a global compact on climate. In fact, we feel that equity should be the base for our engagements to achieve poverty eradication and economic and social development, be it under the Convention or under Rio+20.

It is therefore our hope that this workshop will help us reach fruitful conclusions on this issue and lead us towards a coordinated or common approach, if possible, to the emerging issues.

Thanks you and welcome once again.