

**Statement by Vijai Sharma, Secretary to the Government of India,  
Ministry of Environment and Forests  
Oslo Climate and Forest Conference**

**27<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates and friends,

The Oslo Climate and Forestry Conference demonstrates the commitment of the global community to combat climate change. This follows up on our Paris meeting last March. I thank the Government of Norway for bringing us all together again.

The REDD plus concept promotes a holistic approach for incentivizing actions to reduce emissions worldwide from forests and promote the sustainable management of forests. The ideas are captured in a decision of the recent Conference of Parties at Copenhagen. Whether the partnership document, emanating from this conference, appropriately reflects this comprehensiveness, is a question.

Is the partnership document putting REDD in the foreground at the cost of the plus part. Are we operationalizing the REDD part only. Would financing be available for the plus part. India seeks the operationalization of the entire REDD plus. The approach should be all-embracing and inclusive. It should not exclude.

The reduction of deforestation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks are the two sides of the same coin, where one cannot do without the other. Both are equally important. In fact, the REDD and the plus are seamless. The two

dimensions need to be taken up in parallel. If the tilt in the partnership document is towards reducing deforestation, the balance needs to be set right. An obvious question is whether the document is in 'synch' with the AWG-LCA paper released last week, which is the basis of the UNFCCC negotiations.

The scope of the LCA document is wider, as it includes all the elements of forest mitigation in the Bali Action Plan, i.e., reducing deforestation, conservation, and sustainable management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. All these elements should be on our canvas. We should maintain and preserve the integrity of the REDD plus concept as identified in the Bali Action Plan.

While some developing countries are acting to reduce deforestation, many others like India are preventing diversion of forests to non-forestry uses and are also ensuring large scale afforestation. 1997-2007 saw 3.13 million hectares of forests added in India. Now we seek REDD plus funds for our Green India Mission in the interest of global climate protection. Our forests, about seventy million hectares, sequestered about 177 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2007. This carbon service will enhance with the Green India Mission.

We are establishing in India a national REDD plus coordinating agency. We have already set up a technical group to develop methodologies and procedures for assessment and monitoring of REDD plus actions. The Indian Network for Climate Change Assessment is studying the impact of climate change on our forests and the study will be released in November 2010. India's biodiversity mainly lives in its forests, so in this context we are examining the areas of convergence between the UNFCCC and the Convention on Biodiversity. And, also because India in 2012 will host the eleventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity.

The Paris-Oslo meetings have been constructive and timely, not as negotiation among UNFCCC parties, but as a clearinghouse of ideas where inter-governmental organizations and civil society also contributed. But, it should not be that our discourse takes place under the rubric of REDD plus with the outcomes restricted to REDD without the plus.

My observations emanate from my concern to ensure that the basic premises of the UNFCCC process are not lost sight of. The reduction of deforestation and conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks must be treated at par. Fairness requires that a unit of carbon saved be treated the same as a unit of carbon added.

To conclude, we wish to be counted as a close friend of the Paris-Oslo initiative on REDD plus, indeed a very engaging dialogue. I do hope that our observations are duly addressed as this initiative unfolds. This will also be in the interest of the main process under the UNFCCC framework. With this understanding, we remain positive on constructively engaging with the REDD plus partnership and the outcomes of the Oslo conference. We are ready to take this initiative forward in our collective efforts to address climate change.

Thank you.