



Statement by Hon'ble Mr. Namo Narain Meena, Minister of State for Environment and Forests at the high-level segment of the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on April 22, 2005

Mr. Chairman,

It is an honour to be here for this policy session of the Commission on Sustainable Development which focuses on policy options and possible actions on the three thematic areas of water, sanitation and human settlements and the inter-linkages amongst them in order to meet the goals and targets as contained in the Agenda 21 and the Programme for further implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the relevant Millennium Development Goals. We associate ourselves with the statement made by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77.

Mr. Chairman,

The World Summit on Sustainable Development held at Johannesburg had focused, re-affirming the Rio Principles and the continued relevance of Agenda 21, on the need for concrete action for the implementation of Agenda 21 and achieving sustainable development. The Summit had re-affirmed that addressing poverty was central to the efforts of developing countries in achieving sustainable development. The themes of the first implementation cycle of the multi-year programme of work adopted by the 11th session of CSD last year, i.e., water, sanitation and human settlements, are particularly relevant in the context of efforts at poverty-eradication.

We congratulate you for steering CSD 13 in a manner that gives us all an opportunity to discuss the thematic cluster and related issues of vital importance to the developing countries. We attach considerable importance to this policy session, as it will set the road map for the international community, particularly the developed countries, to reaffirm their political commitment to contribute towards the achievement of the goals and targets that we have set for ourselves.

Lack of financial resources, despite creating of an enabling domestic environment, is the single most important constraint in addressing the imperative of

poverty eradication and improving the livelihoods and quality of life of people of the developing countries. The report of the Secretary-General, for example, estimates that roughly \$ 26 billion per year over the next 11 years would be required to meet the MDG/JPOI targets just for drinking water. Clearly, it is now time to adopt and monitor targets for the means of implementation, including provision of financial resources by State partners and multilateral financial institutions [MFIs]. It is equally imperative that we address the issue of making available necessary technologies on preferential terms to developing countries, including through addressing the IPR regime, and adopt measures that would facilitate access and transfer of such technologies to developing countries.

We share the view that different countries and regions have different needs and priorities and face different challenges. Accordingly there can be no prescriptive 'one size fits all' solution. There will have to be a range of options which are practical and implementable which each country can choose from, depending on the country's priorities, concerns, regulations and capacities.

In the context of cross-cutting issues, besides poverty eradication, I may add equitable access to natural resources is seriously hampered by the unsustainable patterns of production and consumption by the developed world. That the threats to global environment emanate primarily from such unsustainable patterns of production and consumption needs to be reiterated, with the recognition that the developed countries must shoulder the main responsibility for preventing and reversing environmental degradation.

Water is the most critical of all natural resources, and impacts survival, health, pattern of settlements, agriculture, industry, power, fisheries and many other sectors. Major infrastructural investments relate to or are impacted by water policies. For these reasons, in India, we have found it inadvisable to locate all operational and policy-making responsibilities for water in a single agency. We believe this consideration is important when we consider the role of the UN agencies and programmes in the realm of water issues. There is need for co-ordination mechanisms, but the question of institutional structures for water resources policy is a complex one. We believe that it would be better to hasten slowly in our multilateral effort in this regard, and re-visit this issue once we have comprehensively addressed the main questions of financial resources and technology transfer.

Some views have been expressed on rights-based approaches. Public policy certainly needs to have ethical foundations, and accordingly progressive realisation of social and economic rights, in step with growth of the resource base of society, is essential. In our view, pursuit of rights-based approach to development co-operation would do nothing to advance JPOI goals, and may in fact impede them, through reduced emphasis on resource flows, technical assistance and capacity building.

In the context of management of trans-boundary waters, it has been our experience that bilateral approaches have worked well. There is great heterogeneity in the demographic, social and economic situations of watershed and river basins throughout the world, and we do not believe that it is at all possible to

arrive at 'one size fits all' multilateral norms for management of trans-boundary water bodies.

Mr. Chairman,

India has taken several steps to creating an enabling environment towards meeting the JPOI goals, including in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements. This enabling environment has been firmly rooted in an inclusive process which ensures that all citizens have a say and sense of ownership of decisions which affect their life, which is ensured by a strong and vibrant tradition of democracy. The devolution of financial and administrative powers for a range of functions to local self-governing bodies has been enshrined through appropriate Constitutional amendments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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