



Intervention by Mr. Sudhir Mital, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests of India during the thematic discussions at CSD-16 on "DROUGHT" on 7TH May 2008

Mr. Chairman,

While associating ourselves with the statement of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of G-77, we would like to express our appreciation on the Secretary General's report for clearly bringing out the concerns and challenges relating to adverse implications of drought on food security, rural livelihoods and poverty. As a country where drought is not uncommon, we have taken several measures both at micro and macro levels to combat drought, mitigate its effects and most importantly regenerating paths for improved water, food, and fodder availability.

Mr. Chairman,

The statement in the Secretary General's Report that "drought occur in virtually all climatic zones, but their characteristics and impact on society vary significantly among regions" aptly describes the situation in India too. Our drought related guidelines and manuals, which were initially formulated as early as the 19th century and continuously updated since then, and the disaster response policy, covers all aspects of relief, relief preparedness and disaster management. Further, a variety of traditional technologies have been developed by the local communities for drought prevention and mitigating its effects, and the Government is increasingly integrating these technologies in the formal planning and policy processes. Many of these technologies and practices uniquely protect the local biodiversity and social networks.

Mr. Chairman,

We believe that identification of drought prone areas, with varied intensities and time frames, is an important step towards developing strategies and action plans to mitigate the problems. A dedicated Drought Research Unit has been setup to monitor agricultural drought once every two weeks on a real time

basis during the main crop seasons. The use of Arid Anomaly Index, and Vegetative Index through satellite data, provides a highly comprehensive set of early warning and climate and weather information system for a country which has as many as 15 diverse agro-climatic zones.

Mr. Chairman,

We recognize that food security, particular in the rural areas where the impact of drought could be the most severe, is the most important element of drought preparedness. The initiative of preparing a Food Insecurity Atlas of Rural India, the setting up of Desert Medicine Research Centre, and the focus of R&D on developing and extending resilient crop varieties, and appropriate water conservation technologies combining both traditional and modern science, including National Agricultural Insurance Scheme and unique weather-based insurance schemes, have attenuated the risks associated with droughts to a considerable extent.

Mr. Chairman,

India is ready and willing to share its expertise and knowledge with other developing countries in the spirit of South-South Cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

The impacts of projected climate change have fallen disproportionately on developing countries, and particularly on the poor in these countries, who live on lands most susceptible to floods, droughts and desertification. Most developing countries have been doing what they can to cope with impacts of climate change and land degradation. India is spending as much as 2.6 per cent of its GDP on various adaptation related programmes. Developing countries, however, require the technological wherewithal including access to modern and emerging technologies alongwith requisite financing to be able to combat drought comprehensively as very elaborately outlined in the G-77 statement. We hope this meeting will be able to address these issues.

We thank you for a patient hearing.

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