



**Intervention by Ms. Saheli Ghosh Roy, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, during the Thematic Discussion on "Desertification" during IPM to CSD-17, 26 February 2009**

Madam Chair,

We associate with the statement made on behalf of G-77.

Combating desertification has been high on the agenda of Indian Government.

India has launched specific area development programmes which simultaneously build natural, physical, human, financial, political and social capitals of the affected communities. A slew of environmental protection legislations and policies on air, water, land and forests ensure that development does not cause desertification.

Under the National Action Plan on Climate Change, India has launched its National Mission for a 'Green India' under which 6 million hectares of degraded forest land would be afforested. This is the largest afforestation programme in the world.

Reversal of desertification/land degradation and sustainable land management hold the key to sustainable development and also our progress towards attaining the development goals, including poverty eradication.

Efforts of developing countries in combating desertification, however, are not enough. The population densities in dry lands continue to grow and hence little choice but to expand their economic activities to meet their livelihood needs.

Many developing countries have limited access to appropriate cost effective technologies that can contribute to better land use planning and management. There is need for more financial resources, transfer of technologies and capacity building in areas such as mapping and monitoring of the extent of desertification.

There is, therefore, an urgent need for implementation of commitments by the international community to join hands in supplementing the work being done by the national governments.

It must be ensured that the current global crisis does not dilute the commitments.

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