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World Sustainable Development Forum

DSDS 2008

Delhi Sustainable Development Summit Sustainable development and climate change

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Background note

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Sustainable development and climate change

The DSDS (Delhi Sustainable Development Summit) 2008 focuses on one of the greatest challenges facing human society. The importance of climate change in defining the welfare of the human race in the future has been highlighted significantly through the findings of the *Fourth Assessment Report* of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). These findings provide advanced information on the scientific basis of climate change, the impacts arising out of such change, and options for mitigation of emissions of greenhouse gases. The impacts of climate change, in terms of their projected frequency and intensity, would unfavourably affect the prospects for sustainable development. At the same time, mitigation of the emissions of greenhouse gases, which are responsible for human-induced climate change, would concurrently provide sustainable solutions in patterns of development pursued across the globe. Consequently, DSDS 2008 focuses on climate change due to human actions, as assessed scientifically, and the prospects of sustainable development. The discussions that take place during the Summit would not only emphasize the scientific realities of climate change in respect of impacts and mitigation options, but also focus on international efforts to tackle this challenge under the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) and the process by which a new agreement is likely to be reached for implementation globally in the very near future.

VIP panel discussions: The scientific evidence—a call for action

In this session, world leaders who have been exposed to the scientific assessment of

climate change carried out by the IPCC would address the imperatives for action to meet the challenge of climate change in the immediate future. Leaders who participate in this session would deal with the scientific, political, and ethical aspects of the problem, and provide their views on how action can be taken adequately in the immediate future.

Ministerial Session 1: The equity and ethical dimensions of burden sharing

In this session, ministers from the different parts of the world would define the equity and ethical dimensions of burden sharing. The historical responsibility for cumulative emissions of greenhouse gases lies essentially with the developed countries, while some of the most vulnerable regions and communities in the world are those that have hardly contributed to the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. These communities would require assistance for adaptation to the impacts of climate change, and technological as well as financial input for any mitigation measures that they may carry out for containing the emissions of greenhouse gases in the future.

Plenary Session 1: Mitigation and adaptation policies for sustainable development

Even if the concentration of greenhouse gases were to be stabilized at current levels, the impacts of climate change would continue for several decades, making adaptation to climate change an essential part of immediate policies. At the same time, if impacts of climate change are to be delayed, avoided, or

reduced in the future, mitigation at satisfactory levels is essential. This session will deal with policies that combine mitigation and adaptation measures, providing specific reference to institutional arrangements that would need to be put in place.

Climate change: plain speak

An interactive session with Nik Gowing, Main Presenter, BBC World TV

The well-known TV personality Nik Gowing will involve the audience in an active debate in this session, which will define policies and actions to deal with climate change at the global level and present issues of interest to the public. The session will emphasize on the responses of the public and some inherent political issues that will influence actions globally in the future.

Ministerial Session 2: Addressing climate change: Vision 2050 (long-term targets and perspectives)

Any agreement or a set of actions that is to be put in place for tackling climate change in the immediate future would require a clear vision of the level at which the earth's climate and concentration of greenhouse gases would need to be stabilized by the middle of this century. The IPCC's *Fourth Assessment Report* has provided substantial material on assessments that have been carried out, both in respect of impacts related to temperature changes in the future as well as mitigation options that could be linked to different stabilization levels. An agreed vision and clear perspective of stabilization levels to be achieved by 2050 would be an important platform on which immediate actions can be defined and put in place.

Plenary Session 2: Technology and enabling policies – options in the energy sector

If mitigation actions are to be taken for effective stabilization of the climate and concentration of greenhouse gases, options in the energy sector would require consistent architecture and assessment. Technologies would be critical in defining appropriate mitigation options as well as for undertaking certain adaptation measures. However, technologies would be developed and disseminated only in response to specific policies. It would also be essential to focus on policies and technologies that promote sustainable development while meeting climate change objectives related to the energy sector. The session will deal with technology and policy issues both in the short as well as the long term.

Plenary Session 3: Impacts and adaptation – creating local capacity and global resource flows

Issues related to the equity and ethical dimensions of climate change and the vulnerability of some communities to the impacts of climate change bring to the fore the fact that there is an accepted need for creation of local capacity to undertake adaptation measures, which in several cases far exceed the ability of local communities to finance and develop. There is, therefore, a need for the global community to ensure that adequate resources are made available to meet this challenge. This session will survey current requirements for local capacity and define the flow of resources from official and non-official sources to meet this challenge.

Ministerial Session 3: Destination Copenhagen 2009

The 13th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC has highlighted the plan for arriving at a global agreement to deal with multilateral actions in the field of climate change by the time the 15th Conference of the Parties concludes in Copenhagen. Such an outcome would be possible only through adequate steps and actions taken between now and 2009. The ministers taking part in this session will discuss and outline specific steps that are required to ensure that Copenhagen results in the desired outcome in the nature of an appropriate multilateral agreement.

Plenary Session 4: Emerging issues of climate change: the business voice

Implementation of measures to meet the challenges of climate change will involve specific and widespread actions by the business and industry. These would require anticipatory action on the part of the business organizations in identifying expected regulatory and legislative measures that countries and communities may require to undertake as well as business opportunities that would arise, for instance, from technological and policy changes that are

expected in the future. Several business organizations have already taken some of these anticipatory measures, and others are being contemplated. The session will address some of the responsibilities and opportunities that business would have to face and deal with in this regard.

Plenary Session 5: Mainstreaming climate change: the media outlook

Public awareness on climate change has grown to unprecedented levels in recent months. One of the major reasons for this is the involvement of the media across the world in spreading the message that the scientific community has produced fruitful results on all aspects of climate change. This has happened not only because there was a public appetite for scientific information on climate change, but also because representatives of the media decided to inform themselves on the scientific realities of this subject. The session will review all that the media has been able to achieve in informing the public on various aspects of climate change in recent months, and how this role might continue or change in the future. The session will take a comprehensive global view of current developments and the future outlook in this regard.

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