

DSDS 2004: Inaugural Address

4 February 2004

**Shri Yashwant Sinha,
Hon'ble Minister for External Affairs
Government of India, New Delhi**

Theme – “Partnerships for Sustainable Development”

Rt. Hon'ble Mr. Elliot Morley, Minister of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Government of UK,

Hon'ble Deputy Minister for Environmental Affairs and Tourism of South Africa, Her Excellency, Ms. Rejoice Mabudafhasi,

Dr. Klaus Topfer, Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, Mr. Jan Pronk, Dr. R.K. Pachauri,

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to inaugurate the Fourth Delhi Sustainable Development Summit. I extend a warm welcome to all the foreign participants. The Delhi Sustainable Development Summit has, within a few years of its launch, acquired the status of an important annual gathering of global leaders and experts who have distinguished themselves in various areas critical to the well-being of the world.

2. The theme of the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit 2004, “Partnerships for Sustainable Development” is testimony to the commitment of the participants gathered here and the organizers at TERI to harness the energies of governments and all major groups. We are all united in purpose to improve the lives of humanity while ensuring that the process of development is not at the cost of the natural resources of our planet.

3. Sustainable development is now an accepted term in our lexicon. However, diplomatic negotiators and word-smiths have grappled in the last decade to define the concept which has meant different things to different people. There are many who think sustainable development is synonymous with environmental protection. This is of course only a third of the truth. Equally important are the pillars of economic and social development.

4. For millions who constitute the majority of the world's population, the concept of sustainable development implies the eradication of poverty and raising standards of living while protecting the earth's finite resources from the depredation of profligate production and consumption. The primacy therefore of the need for economic and social development is recognised, with a balancing of environmental concerns. In accepting this philosophy of development, developing countries such as India have voluntarily sacrificed the easier option of developmentalism which provided a popular path to quick prosperity of the First World, and opted for alternatives which are responsible and accountable to present and future generations. This was not an easy choice, as all emulative models of growth and life-styles were based on unsustainable but in the short run, less expensive examples. When the world embraced sustainable development as the guiding ideology for growth in Rio in 1992, the commitment of developing countries was secured and predicated on assurances of access to new and additional financial resources and environmentally sound technologies which unfortunately, have not been forthcoming. However, in India, we have not wasted time and have designed appropriate models for sustainable development in keeping with national priorities and conditions.

5. India, as an emerging global economic player, envisages an ambitious growth rate of 8% per annum of GDP and doubling per capita income in 10 years. The Tenth Five Year Plan for the period 2002-2007 has defined national development objectives in broader terms of enhancing of human well being, thus encompassing all the three pillars of sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals have been incorporated into the Plan with even more ambitious targets. For example, for the period 2002-2007, the Plan aims to reduce the poverty ratio to 21%, provide potable water in all villages, enroll all children in school by 2003 and increase the literacy rate to 75%. It also aims at creating 50 million jobs by 2007 and providing shelter to every one of our billion plus citizens by 2012.

In keeping with MDG 7, that is, to ensure environmental sustainability, the Tenth Plan targets to increase forest cover to 25% by 2007 and 33% by 2012, and the cleaning of all major rivers by 2007.

6. The Indian development canvas is gargantuan and we are acutely aware that the achievement of objectives will require tremendous efforts for resource mobilization, investment in infrastructure, improved allocative efficiency of resources, investment in social sectors and people's participation.

7. These challenges call for an enabling framework for sustainable development to be in place. This, we believe, is provided by our political system of democratic governance, with an active civil society and media, and devolution of power to states and local bodies, ensuring people's participation in decision making. This structure makes for a compact between the state and the people constituting the most enduring partnership for sustainable development.

8. While the concept of partnerships has emerged as the new buzzword in recent years, I feel that its perspective has been circumscribed by attempts to confine it to identified sectors. Partnerships for sustainable development need to be forged on a larger scale between the governing and the governed, between the developed and the developing, between business interests and social justice, between the empowered and the marginalised.

9. In India, we have tried to establish a sustained partnership with the people through the transfer of the management of crucial sectors of the economy to village councils and thus empowered them to manage their own resources and achieve sustainable livelihoods. A number of initiatives for the management of natural resources such as Joint Forest Management, Watershed Development Committees and Participatory Irrigation Management Committees constitute successful models of partnerships for sustainable development. In each of these countrywide programmes, the planning, implementation, monitoring and benefit sharing are placed in the hands of communities including civil society and the private sector, with the government at hand to provide the enabling environment.

10. At the international level, globalisation demands partnerships between countries and the private and public sector for world development to be sustainable and sustained. Such partnerships require developed countries to provide enhanced market access to products from developing countries and to refrain from trade distorting and protectionist practices. Any true partnership between the North and the South should see the former commit to the ODA target of 0.7% of GDP and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies on concessional and even non-commercial terms. Partnerships are also called for between developed and developing countries to reform the global financial architecture, to make it more democratic and responsive to the needs of sustainable development.

11. In the more limited but familiar sense of the term, the parameters of partnership for sustainable development were negotiated and agreed upon during the last session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in the context of the outcomes of the Rio and Johannesburg Conferences. The fundamental understandings reached were that partnerships as voluntary multi - stakeholder initiatives have an important contribution to make to the achievement of internationally agreed objectives in the area of sustainable development, and that they supplement, not substitute, governmental responsibility and action. Criteria for partnerships include the need for concrete value addition in the form of resources, technology and capacity building and that they be implemented in a transparent and accountable manner, consistent with national development strategies and priorities. The twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to be held in April 2004 will provide an opportunity to examine the synergies provided by partnerships in the key sectors of water, human settlements and sanitation. CSD 12 will also be a trend setter as it is the first meeting of the comprehensive work cycle agreed to in 2003. We believe that the working and outcome of the Commission should include the high ideals of partnerships, that is, be inclusive, democratic, transparent, focussed and recognise the central role and responsibilities of governments.

12. In conclusion, I would like to wish all of you productive and useful deliberations at DSDS 2004 and hope that this forum serves as a successful example of a partnership of ideas between governments and other stakeholders.

Thank You.