

## Land as Integrator and Accelerator of SDGs

Land plays a central role in obtaining the Sustainable Development Goals. The panellists successively presented their views on the challenges in sustainable land use and land management. Outdated land records are amongst the major hurdles in land use planning in India. The issue of equity in land use planning was also raised, there is a need to make land use planning more inclusive by ensuring equal benefits to the local community, which often is neglected. The management of our common resources, such as forests, fixing Minimum Support Prices (MSPs), developing a methodology to derive MSPs, enabling their access to the market are critical aspects in this regard.

Out of the 17 SDGs, 12 have direct links with Land, stressed Mr. Jigmet, who shared essential insights on what the MoEFFC plans to do in coming months. While being an economic asset, land can help definitely help to achieve the 17 SDG. Especially in the context of urbanization and industrialization, safeguarding slum dwellers is the way forward to reduce poverty and secure the vulnerable title-holders. The role of Urban Local Bodies was scrutinized; it was proposed that means have to be developed by the Urban Local Bodies to generate their own source of incomes to meet their revenue expenditure. A need was felt to adopt planning in an integrated manner. Through his address, Mr. Tapka made an impassioned appeal to “respect rather than plunder Biophysical Resources.”

Dr. Tareq Emtairah, Director of Energy, UNIDO, spoke about how industries and the factors of production (complementary inputs) such as energy, water and raw materials, have much more complex relations with land use and direct, competing interest for land. He stressed on the need for an integrated common framework to analyse the pathways and the trade-offs that can be made within water, energy and food systems, to allow us to think in an integrated fashion. UNIDO has developed such an integrated decision support tool which can aide planning across the globe.

The session also presented several innovative strategies which can be adopted across various industries, such as floating solar, solar roof-top and integrated farming with solar. Sky-mining was introduced as an innovative solution to restoring land health and combating global warming at the same time. Mr Carl Pendragon, CEO, Skymining Company, Sweden, opined that when our economic wealth is based on degrading and depleting resources, or degenerating the planet, then it means that economic development in the world is in direct conflict with nature. The first task we have to do, according to him, is to decouple the connection between economic growth and degradation and depletion of all resources.

Dr. Naresh C Saxena, Former Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development spoke on the necessity of laws which allowed farmers to benefit as well as the industry to advance. He highlighted how our programs on watershed development and rain water harvesting need community action. Given that all our policies are household based, community feeling is getting lost somewhere.

Mr. SK Mishra, Director, Power Systems, Solar Energy Corporation of India spoke about how a vast majority of renewable projects are delayed because of disputes on land. To reduce the pressure on the land renewable industry is working on solutions including, floating solar. If competitive costs are achieved, floating solar can be big game changer, according to Mr. Mishra.

Mr. Hukum Singh Meena, Joint Secretary, Department of Land Resource, Ministry of Rural Development, said, "No one wants a wasteland, even Industries want fertile lands, policy decisions are required to safeguard food security. If you have good Land governance, good Land database, then it is possible to take comprehensive decision for development project"

A refreshing suggestion came towards the end, where it was suggested that India needs to steer spiritual leadership, because the question at hand is essentially an existential one.