



WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2023

MAINSTREAMING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

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Lifestyles for Environment: Institutions, Policies, and Social Movements

PLENARY SESSION SUMMARY

Venue: Stein Auditorium

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World Sustainable Development Summit (2023), Lifestyles for Environment: Institutions, Policies, and Social Movements, Plenary Session Summary (Rapporteur: Rishabh Chopra), New Delhi: The Energy and Resources Institute.

Making Words Count @WSDS 2023

“ Every individual has a role to play to encourage a sustainable way of living. We have been overconsuming for too long and now we have to think about every small action that we can do because that accumulates and will make a difference. The LiFE initiative really reflects the true empowerment of the community to overcome global challenges.

Ms Mariam Almheiri

Minister, Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, United Arab Emirates

“ The comprehensive concepts of sustainable development will not be achieved without participation at both the international and the national levels. Discussions are important between all stakeholders, such as the government, private sector, and scientists in addition to studying past experiences, while working to understand the ground reality and trying to change it for the better to achieve optimal exploitation of natural resources.

Dr Ali Abou Senna

CEO, Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency and Assistant Minister

“ For a huge amount of transformation, it is a change of technology and not a change of lifestyle. If we internalize all the externalities of a cow, they would be a lot more expensive, and the conclusion about it is, that people are going to consume less beef – that is a significant behavioural change of diet to a more ‘Indian style’ diet.

Prof. Jeffrey D. Sachs

Professor, Earth Institute and Columbia University

“ We have been using the atmosphere as a big dustbin, as a free dustbin mostly and the size of the dustbin the inhabitants of this planet are using everywhere, is not the same. Lifestyles are of course led by individuals, but there is a collective aspect to that notion. Governments, the private sector, and other actors have a responsibility in terms of providing the right framework to facilitate action by individuals.

Prof. Jean-Pascal van Ypersele

Former Vice Chair, IPCC

“ We must avoid a negative finger-pointing agenda and talk about positive agenda for change – it is mainly about change in society, political decisions to organize society, and business decisions as to how we draw on technology to scale that change, adding to that the component of lifestyle change.

Dr Erik Solheim

Former Executive Director of UN Environment and President Green Belt and Road Institute, BRI Green Development Institute

“ Trying to maintain the current economic system and at the same time fixing a chronic triple planetary crisis is not consistent for it creates a lot of confusion. Taking painkillers will not heal chronic diseases. We need to move from an extraction-based production to a creation-based one. We must reward the responsible, innovative, and creative ways of meeting human needs.

Dr Janez Potočnik

Co-chair, International Resource Panel

“ Considering the various metrics, it is necessary to sort out the conceptual issues with regards to LiFE.

Dr. Prodipto Ghosh, Distinguished Fellow, TERI

“ Climate change and unsustainable resource use are key drivers of unsustainable lifestyles. Lifestyle for environment needs to go beyond individual action to collective action to involve every stakeholder.

Dr Suneel Pandey, Director, TERI

Actionable Messages

Message 1: Conceptual clarity is required with respect to LiFE. The assessment indices for sustainable consumption and production must be more objective and transparent.

Message 2: About three-fourth of the emissions reduction can be achieved through technological transformation, and not lifestyle change alone. So, the efforts must be directed more towards technology transition with an appropriate mix of behavioural change.

Message 3: Lifestyle changes should be facilitated by legal, economic, and policy frameworks that can influence individual action.

Message 4: Demand management or demand reduction as a strategy should be applied keeping in mind the principles of equity. The burden of demand reduction should not fall on those people who lack sufficient access to resources.

Message 5: Community participation, awareness, partnerships, and collective action are necessary for the implementation of the LiFE initiative.

Narrative

The plenary session titled, “Lifestyles for Environment: Institutions, Policies, and Social Movements” was conducted as part of the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS), the annual flagship event of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). The aim of the session was to highlight the importance of the LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) as one of the strategies to combat climate change. The mission LiFE was announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, as part of COP26 of the UNFCCC at Glasgow, United Kingdom (2021). The discussion was chaired by Dr Prodipto Ghosh, Distinguished Fellow, TERI and the discussant for the session was Dr Suneel Pandey, Director, TERI. Discussions revolved around demystifying the concept of LiFE, its need and importance in sustainable development and the direction in which the policies, institutions, and governance mechanisms must evolve to integrate the concept of LiFE.

The session started with the introductory remarks by **Dr Prodipto Ghosh, Distinguished Fellow, TERI**. He spoke about the problem of equity with respect to LiFE, by highlighting the variations in methodology used to rank countries in the indices prepared by National Geographic on sustainable consumption and the WEF's Environment Performance Index (EPI). He pointed out that, on the one hand, the national geographic index ranks developing countries higher on sustainable consumption parameters and on the other hand, the EPI has awarded higher scores to developed countries. This shows that, at the very onset, it is necessary to sort out the conceptual issues with regards to LiFE.

The discussion was taken forward by **Ms Mariam Almheiri, Minister, Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, United Arab Emirates**, who highlighted how the LiFE initiative promotes community participation. Ms Mariam talked about how the UAE, being the host of COP28 of the UNFCCC in 2023, is taking steps to integrate LiFE as part of climate action policies. She listed initiatives like the Circular Economy Policy of the UAE, The UAE Environmental Policy, The UAE Green Growth Strategy and also the Sustainable Finance Framework with particular focus on long-term low carbon development. Apart from that, she also highlighted the Ne'ma programme of the UAE government that aims to halve food loss and wastage by 2030. She concluded her address by stressing on the importance of “small actions” to address the climate change problem.

Dr Ali Abou Senna, CEO, Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency and Assistant Minister, listed the measures taken by the Egyptian government to integrate environment decisions and climate action in economic and development sectors. The key measures, he mentioned as part of his address, were – environment sustainability standard guidelines with the aim of greening the budget by 50% in 3 years, preserving natural resources and protecting ecosystems; National Climate Change strategy 2050, capacity building and community participation including NGOs and other stakeholders, and additionally encouraging investment in national parks and national resources within a proper framework.

Mr Jeffrey D. Sachs, Professor, Earth Institute and Columbia University, provided a unique perspective on the impact of behavioural changes. He pointed out that most of the transformation from a present system to a future decarbonized world will not bring about considerable compromise on our current lifestyles. For instance, he observed that transitioning to zero-carbon power, electric vehicles, electric cooking, zero-carbon heating, hydrogen-powered ocean vessels will largely be technological transitions and not behavioural transitions. So, almost 75% of the emission reduction has to come about through changes in technology and not in lifestyles. In the same breadth, he also observed that certain lifestyle changes will be required though, which include dietary changes – a transition towards a more “Indian style diet”, waste management practices at households, higher taxes on the rich, use of bicycles and walkways, automation in agriculture due to increasing urbanization, and also a transition towards smaller and nuclear families. He

concluded by stating that sustainable development will include a mix of technological and lifestyle changes, with the major one being technological, but in any case, lives will change for the better in the future.

Continuing the discussion, **Mr Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, former IPCC Vice-Chair**, emphasized the link between lifestyles and climate change by highlighting the fact that all lifestyles will be affected by climate change, with the lifestyles of vulnerable being the most affected. He observed that the world was using the atmosphere as a “big dustbin” which carries the invisible waste of GHG emissions. He brought back into focus the principle of equity, when he pointed out that the size of the dustbin is different everywhere in the world, with the biggest sizes in the developed world. As part of solutions on climate change, he pointed out the findings of the recent IPCC report which say that the actions on demand (of which lifestyles are a big component) in key sectors like agriculture, energy, transport, and housing have the potential to reduce emissions by 40-70%, while observing that the principle of equity needs to be applied while opting for demand management strategies. Finally, he underscored the need for a proper economic, legal, and policy framework to facilitate individual action on lifestyle changes.

Drawing his inspiration from the ancient Indian texts, **Dr Erik Solheim, former Executive Director, UN Environment Programme**, spoke about the need to move away from a negative, finger-pointing agenda towards a more positive agenda for lifestyle change, the one that takes us closer to nature. For instance, he pointed out the achievements of cities like Hyderabad and Shenzhen to become “green cities” as a way of reinforcing the positive agenda. Second, he also talked about health-focused urban development of cities like Copenhagen, Amsterdam which make the cities walk and bicycle-friendly. Third, he talked about a gradual transition towards a more vegetarian style diet. Fourth, Dr Erik, mentioned job transitions to zero-carbon sectors as part of lifestyle change. He concluded his address by highlighting the importance of a “culture of peace” to ensure sustainable development, especially in the context of the current geopolitical situation.

The last speaker was **Dr Janez Potočnik, Co-chair, International Resource Panel**. His address was focused on the need and methods to reduce materials extraction and processing, in the wake of their impact on global climate, biodiversity loss, water stress, and health-related pollution. He reiterated the importance of demand-side measures as discussed by Dr. Ypersele as part of his address and questioned the neglect of resource efficiency in the policies of the developed countries. He stressed upon the importance of India’s G20 presidency and highlighted how the idea of LiFE should be incorporated to optimize energy and material usage, in particular by developed countries that should aim for less and lesser usage in the years to come, as emissions reduction potential from lifestyle change is 3-4 times higher in high-income countries in comparison to developing countries. In conclusion, Dr Potočnik mentioned how humans need to be more embedded with nature, the need to move away from an extraction-based production to a more creation-based production system, and fixing of governance structures.
