

**STATEMENT**  
**BY**  
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**TO THE**  
**CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES**  
**TO THE**  
**CLIMATE CHANGE CONVENTION**

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**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS**  
**NEW DELHI**

## **Madam President, Distinguished Delegates, Friends:**

It is with a sense of awe and humility that I stand at this podium. This distinguished gathering is the cynosure of eyes and hearts and minds across the five continents of the globe. Berlin, at least for these few days, is the centre of the world. Common people, well-meaning people, concerned people, have great expectations about what we are going to do in this first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to a Convention that seeks to preserve our planet in the way it has been in the memory of humankind.

I bring to you all the greetings of my people, ladies and gentlemen, and also express our profuse thanks to the Government and people of Germany for hosting this Conference in Berlin. Berlin is more than a city; it is an idea, an idea which at once brings to mind unity; it is a symbol of the breaking down of barriers, a symbol of hope renewed. To this rich symbol, redolent with meaning, the German people have added their warm hospitality and fabled efficiency, providing the perfect setting for the fruitful launching of action.

The Climate Change Convention is not merely about the control of greenhouse gases. Eradication of poverty, avoiding risk to food production and sustainable development are three principles quite explicit in the Convention. The alleviation of poverty and the prospect of sustained and sustainable growth by themselves would serve to improve qualitatively the environment in developing countries and, by implication, the global environment. Poverty remains the central issue and the challenge is to find a development path that is not only sustainable but which is also socially just and culturally acceptable.

The adverse effects of climate change are making themselves increasingly manifest even as we meet here. The commitment targets of the Convention as it stands today are woefully inadequate to meet the terrible prospect that confronts us. There is much talk of 'adequacy of commitments'. What we should actually be talking about is 'inadequacy of commitments'! Action taken so far gives us little optimism for the future that even present commitments will be met by Annex I countries by the year 2000. Since there is no commitment to even stabilise emissions, leave alone enhance reduction, after the year 2000, even these meagre commitments are rendered infructuous and temporary.

There are moves to rectify this. The most notable of these is the draft Protocol submitted by the Alliance of Small Island States. We sympathise wholly with the concerns of AOSIS. India itself is by no means a small island State, but we are a State with many small islands - in fact, two of our federal administrative units are entirely made up of groups of islands in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. We also have a coastline stretching to more than 7000 kms. Even a marginal increase in sea levels would displace tens of millions of our countrymen, increase soil salinity, and adversely affect food production in our country. We, therefore, feel a kinship with other developing countries that are most threatened, and are eager to involve ourselves in a process of discussions on the drawing up of a time-table for enhanced commitments for the reduction of greenhouse gases, provided - and only provided - that it is absolutely clear that these increased commitments are only for Annex I countries, and that developing countries will not be burdened with commitments any more than they have already accepted under the Convention as it stands.

We reject the insidious moves to divide the developing countries into new categories. These moves go against the grain of the consensus reached at Rio and would amount not only to rewriting the Convention but also to reopening the entire environment versus development debate. Would Annex I countries accept categorisation within themselves of those who have fulfilled their commitments and those who have taken inadequate steps to do so? Or those who have developed having caused less environmental damage and those who have 'mal-developed'? To us, terms like 'future' and 'potential' emissions have no meaning unless these are linked to cumulative 'historical' and 'past' emissions. The future is still in the realm of conjecture. But the past is a shameful historical fact, the tragic fruits of which we are living with today, and which has necessitated the very drawing up of such a Convention.

How can we talk of 'burden sharing'? Equitable burden sharing in emission reduction has no meaning unless it is preceded by equitable benefit sharing of environmental space. Even at a conservative estimate, the privileges enjoyed by the North for excess emissions are worth 100 billion dollars annually. This is the 'environmental rent' that ought to be transferred to developing countries every year in lieu of 'eating' into their environmental space. Even as we talk here, the North is 'free riding' on the back of the South. It is not merely a question of emissions that have to be reduced, but more to the point is that atmospheric concentrations have to be stabilised and reduced. Just during the negotiation phase, between 1990 and this first Conference of the Parties in 1995, the Annex I countries have emitted greenhouse gases which would suffice

India's development needs, even at an accelerated pace, for the next 50 years! There should be no comparison between the 'survival emissions' of developing countries and the 'luxury emissions' of the developed world.

Even though the bulk of CO<sub>2</sub> build-up is on account of industrialised countries, which are even today the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions, in a spirit of global cooperation, the developing countries, who have done little or nothing to create the problem, entered into negotiations leading to the Convention on Climate Change. In a spirit of compromise we accepted the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The very fact that we are participating in the processes of the Convention is a fulfillment of our 'common' responsibility; the commitments for emission cutback on the part of Annex I countries is on account of their differentiated responsibilities.

The vulnerability of our people extends beyond the more obvious effects of sea level rise. The capacity of the poor to withstand catastrophic impacts is much less than that of the rich. There is the whole question of adaptation to the changing global climate and as time passes by, the constraints on development alternatives and policy options open to us keep on increasing. How to generate power, how to use land, what crops to grow - the options available to us become increasingly less. How are developing countries to be compensated for this, the not so obvious and yet, I would say, the more drastic of the effects of climate change? Delays in emission reduction by the North increasingly diminish the opportunities and options available to the South.

An issue which has become the focus of a great deal of contention and concern is Joint Implementation. It seems to represent different views to different people. India's approach is more in the nature of appreciating the various aspects, both practical as well as legal, as to what is really meant by it, its practicability in the overall context of the Convention itself and the extent to which the overall objectives of emission reduction, poverty eradication and sustainable development would be achieved. We are willing to go along with a pilot phase, free of any crediting, provided it is unambiguously recognised that:

- joint implementation for the fulfillment of commitments under Article 4.2 (a) & (b) is an option provided only to Annex I countries;
- participation by developing countries in joint activities is voluntary, bilateral and not linked with any commitments under the Convention;



- it is clear that activities jointly implemented are merely supplemental to efforts at climate change mitigation, and can never solve the entire, or even a significant portion, of the problem;
- it does not dilute the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, the recognition of which was a milestone at Rio;
- and most important, that it is not used as an excuse by the North to continue with their present profligate consumption patterns which are at the root of the unsustainable mess we find ourselves in.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we face the actuality of scarce resources and the increasing potential for conflict. Policy instruments such as tradeable emissions, carbon taxes and joint implementation may well serve to make matters worse unless they are properly referenced to targets and time tables to be observed by those responsible for the damage to the atmosphere and biosphere. Protecting the world's environment requires that development be sustainable. It also implies the implementation of a programme for convergence at equitable and sustainable per values for use of environmental space on a per capita basis globally. In our view, equal rights to carbon usage is fundamental to the Convention. The social, financial and ecological inter-relationships of equity should guide the route to global ecological recovery. It is impossible for us to accept that which is not ethically justifiable, technically accurate or socially conducive to the interest of poor people as well as the global common good. Agenda 21 cries out to stimulate growth and development in poor countries, not to stifle it.

Madam President,

India has endeavoured at this Conference to get the world to move forward in the path of partnership that Rio opened for us. We were dismayed to see that some countries appeared to cling to the ambiguities in the Convention rather than treat the Convention as the green signal (and I use the term 'green' in both its senses!) to move ahead. My delegation has taken a pro-active role; and India has sought more than compromise: we have sought common ground - on adequacy, on joint implementation, on technology transfer. India believes that when the future of humankind is at stake, there is no time for rhetoric or posturing. We came to Berlin with hope and with determination. May we leave with renewed hope and renewed determination.

Thank you.