



# “Climate Change is The Result of Unsustainable Lifestyles and Consumption Patterns; India’s Glorious Traditions have Stood for Sustainable Lifestyles”: Union Environment Minister

## Country statement by Dr. Harsh Vardhan at COP 23 in Bonn

Posted On: 16 NOV 2017 9:00PM by PIB Delhi

Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan has said that the challenge of climate change being faced today is the result of unsustainable lifestyles and consumption patterns. Making the Country Statement at COP-23 in Bonn today, the Minister said that at times, it may be difficult to take hard measures to address climate change, as we have still not fully come to terms with the enormity of the challenge. Dr. Harsh Vardhan emphasized that India’s traditional wisdom can be a beacon of light, as its glorious traditions have stood for sustainable lifestyles and care for nature for centuries.

Appreciating the initiative taken by the Fijian Presidency for adopting the Bula spirit of inclusiveness for guiding climate change discussions and action, Dr. Harsh Vardhan underlined the fact that India supports an inclusive approach and believes that citizens are important stakeholders and must also be included in this process. He added that if all global citizens contribute to ‘green good deeds’, the challenge of combating climate change shall become more manageable.

The following is the text of the Environment Minister’s Country Statement at COP-23 in Bonn:

“At the outset, let me convey my sincere thanks to the COP Presidency, Government of Fiji for steering the Twenty Third Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC and Government of Germany for their warm hospitality and hosting this COP. We look forward to working closely with the COP Presidency towards achieving a meaningful and balanced outcome at COP 23.

COP 23 is extremely crucial as it would set the stage for the 2018 Facilitative Dialogue, accelerate pre 2020 action and firm up the modalities for implementation of the Paris Agreement. India has deep cultural and historic ties with Fiji. Like Fiji, India has a long coastline of 7,517 Km spread over 9 States and 4 Union territories. It has 1382 islands, some of which are quite large. The coastal areas support a number of economic and strategic activities and are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. Our countries, have had a history of shared challenges and long standing cooperation. I assure you of our highest commitment to support you in your efforts for charting out a strong and holistic approach to combating climate change.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the world leaders and everyone gathered here today for their resolution to uphold the Paris Agreement in form and spirit and once again demonstrate the success of multilateralism. However, this is only the beginning. The task ahead is its effective operationalization in accordance with the agreed principles of Equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC). We must also address the issue of climate justice.

The climate change challenge that we face today is result of unsustainable lifestyles and consumption patterns which are not necessarily linked to higher levels of well-being. We may at times find it difficult to take hard measures to address climate change as we still have not fully come to terms with the enormity of the challenge. It often takes a hurricane, a massive hole in the Antarctic ice sheet, a devastating forest fire or an extreme flood event, to humble us, and remind us of our role in the current crisis, and nudge us to take action. We need not always wait for scientific reports to act. Additional and early Pre -2020 actions by developed countries under Kyoto Protocol and provision of Finance, Technology Transfer and Capacity building support to developing countries are critical for limiting the global temperature rise to 2°C by end of century while keeping the door open to keep it below 1.5°C.

India’s climate actions are synchronized with its development goals and simultaneously reflect its bold vision for combating climate change. India has undertaken ambitious mitigation and adaptation actions in the field of clean energy, especially renewable energy, enhancement of energy efficiency, development of less carbon intensive and resilient urban centers, promotion of waste to wealth, safe, smart and sustainable green transportation network, abatement of pollution and efforts to enhance carbon sink through creation of forest and tree cover. Planned actions and economic reforms have contributed positively to the rapidly declining growth rate of energy intensity in India and steps are being undertaken to de-couple the Indian energy system from carbon in the long run. However, poverty eradication remains an overriding priority for us as we strive to ensure housing, electricity and food security for all. India has taken ambitious targets in its NDC and is on path for achieving those. This is in line with all our glorious traditions which have for centuries stood for sustainable lifestyles and care for nature. In fact India’s traditional wisdom can be a beacon of light at this stage. We appreciate the initiative by the Fijian Presidency for adopting the Bula spirit of inclusiveness for guiding climate change discussions and action. India supports an inclusive approach and believes that citizens are important stakeholders and must also be included in this process. I think if all global citizens contribute to ‘green good deeds’, the challenge of combating climate change shall become more manageable.

Going forward, we expect that the COP 23 outcomes are balanced and reached upon through a party-driven process. They should not result in reinterpretation of the Paris Agreement and equal progress should be made on all pillars.

At COP 21 in Paris, Mr. Narendra Modi, Indian Prime Minister and Mr. François Hollande, French President released a book ‘Ecology

of our worlds: views on climate and the environment'. It highlighted the wisdom of ancient and contemporary thinkers on the environment and climate, to serve as guidance to inspire the necessary transformation and pave the way for harmonious co-existence between humans and nature and a communion between our inner self and outer life. It is in this spirit that we are organizing sessions on Yoga at the India Pavilion here in Bonn. I welcome you all to come and benefit from this ancient Indian practice, the spiritual aspects of which, can address lifestyle related issues and provide a solution to climate change.

UN Secretary General U Thant, in his address at the 7th General Assembly held in New York in 1970, pondered what a future universal historian on another planet would say about us 'With all their genius and with all their skill, they ran out of foresight and air and food and water and ideas.' This is not a future we wish to leave for our children. This is our chance to act fast and do more to save the only planet that we have got. Let us make ourselves proud.

Thank You”.

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