

“India considers Climate Change as a major Threat to Collective being, wants to Play a Positive and Constructive Role in Combating it”: Dr. Harsh Vardhan Environment Minister’s address at the Inauguration of India Pavilion at COP-23

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Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan has said that India considers climate change as a major threat to collective well-being and wants to play a positive, as well as constructive role in combating it. Addressing a gathering at the inauguration of India Pavilion at the ongoing meeting of Conference of Parties (COP-23) at Bonn in Germany today, the Minister said that climate change will put a disproportionate burden on the poor and marginalised sections of the global community. He added that scientific evidence clearly indicates the severity of climate change and the cost of delayed action. “Access to clean air, water, and a livable climate are inalienable human rights. And solving this crisis is just not a question of politics, it is our moral obligation”, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said.

Emphasising that though India’s per capita emissions are only one-third of global average and its contribution to global stock of carbon dioxide is less than 3%, India has still moved ahead with implementation of path-breaking initiatives under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi.

The Minister pointed out that India Pavilion is a window to our heritage and our progress, our traditions and indigenous technology, aspirations and achievements.

Inviting views and best practices among different stakeholders, Dr. Harsh Vardhan stated that one of the key global objectives is to develop an inclusive world order that does not leave anyone behind. The Minister underlined poverty eradication as one of the most fundamental objectives we all must work together upon. Dr. Harsh Vardhan also pointed out that the contribution of citizens, sustainable lifestyles and climate justice provides an alternative means to address climate change, which must be rigorously pursued

The Minister also highlighted several key initiatives at the national and state level.

The following is the text of the Environment Minister’s speech in Bonn today:

“I welcome you all to the India Pavilion at COP 23. India considers climate change a major threat to our collective well-being and wishes to play a positive and constructive role in combating it. We have large vulnerable populations and therefore, we take the challenge seriously, especially because climate change shall put disproportionate burden on the poor and marginalized sections of the global community. Therefore, this COP is of great significance to all of us.

We have gathered here at COP-23 in Bonn to move forward and work towards developing guidelines for efficient implementation of the Paris Agreement under the Convention.

Scientific evidence clearly indicates the severity of it and the cost of delayed action. Access to clean air, water, and a liveable climate are inalienable human rights. And solving this crisis is just not a question of politics, it is our moral obligation. We have only one planet and humankind must become accountable for the destruction of our collective home. Protecting our future on this planet depends on the conscious evolution of our species. Though India’s per

capita emissions are only one-third of global average, and its contribution to global stock of carbon dioxide is less than 3%, it has still moved ahead with implementation of path breaking initiatives under the dynamic leadership of the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi.

In this context, the India Pavilion is a window to our heritage and our progress; our traditions and our indigenous technology; our aspirations and our achievements. India's new economic momentum is a subject of international attention and a source of global opportunity.

A series of events will be hosted at India Pavilion showcasing India's achievement, contributions and initiatives to address various dimensions of climate change and we invite exchange of views and best practices among different stakeholders. Therefore, we are here with a constructive and positive approach. One of the key global objectives is to develop an inclusive world order that leaves no one behind. Therefore, poverty eradication is one of the most fundamental objective that we all must work together to bestow upon the future generations a healthy and green planet.

Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister, we have launched many policies and institutional mechanisms to advance our climate actions. These initiatives are a reflection of our commitment towards addressing climate change concerns including energy security, food and water security, capacity enhancement at national and state level etc. Some of the key initiatives include:

- Achieving about 58.3 GW of Renewable Energy Capacity out of a targeted 175 GW for 2022.
- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana for providing free LPG connections and Ujala for embracing energy efficient LED bulbs dedicated towards supporting citizens move towards sustainable lifestyle.
- The broad policy initiatives of the central government are supplemented by actions of the State Governments. 32 States and Union Territories have put in place the State Action Plan on Climate Change attempting to mainstream climate change concerns in their planning process.
- As part of our mission on strategic knowledge on climate change, we have established 8 Global Technology Watch Groups in the areas of Renewable Energy Technology, Advance Coal Technology, Enhanced Energy Efficiency, Green Forest, Sustainable Habitat, Water, Sustainable Agriculture and Manufacturing.
- India is one of the few countries where, despite ongoing development, forest and tree cover has increased transforming country's forests into a net sink owing to national policies aimed at conservation and sustainable management of forests.
- A number of schemes for transformation and rejuvenation of urban areas have been launched including Smart Cities Mission, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation. These schemes have integrated appropriate adaptation and mitigation measures for environment protection.
- Swachh Bharat Mission has been launched with aim to make India clean and litter free. Government has recently revised following waste management rules to make them more effective, efficient and stringent.
- Government has revised six waste management rules which are more effective, efficient and stringent. These include rules for solid waste, Plastic waste, E-waste, bio-Medical and Hazardous and Construction and Demolition Waste.
- Greening of India's extensive Railway routes and Highways is being undertaken.
- Air Quality Index launched in over 30 cities to provide real-time data of air pollution on daily basis.

- Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana has been formulated with the vision of extending the coverage of irrigation and improving water use efficiency 'More crop per drop'.
- Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana has been launched for farmers' welfare. Another scheme has been launched to provide Soil Health Card to every farmer. Further Government of India has set up the goal is to double the income of the farmers by 2022.
- Second Phase of Science Express Climate Action Special train with the aim to create awareness among various sections of society, especially students, on the science of climate change, the observed and anticipated impacts, and different possible responses as to how climate change can be combated.
- Government has launched "Skill India" with the target to provide skill training in various sectors including sustainable development to about 400 million people by 2022.
- Zero Effect, Zero Defect is a policy initiative to enhance energy efficiency and resources efficiency in Medium & Small Industries.
- Another important initiative relating to rivers is the National Mission for Clean Ganga which seeks to rejuvenate the river along its length of more than 2,500 km.
- Digital India has been launched to transform India into digital empowered society and knowledge economy.
- All these schemes contribute to mitigation and adaptation.

India has been ambitious in its climate change actions and expect other countries also to be ambitious based on their historical responsibility on the basis of equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities. We also believe that contribution of citizens, sustainable lifestyles and climate justice provides an alternative means to address climate change which must be rigorously pursued."

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