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**Speech of Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the High Level Segment of the Eighth Session of Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
New Delhi - 30TH OCTOBER, 2002**

President of the Conference, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

India is privileged to host the Eighth Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. I welcome our foreign guests to this land of rich cultural and natural heritage.

Climate Change has emerged as one of the most serious environmental concerns of our times. It is a global phenomenon with diverse local impacts. In 1992, we adopted the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Convention has provided us with a sound basis for global cooperation. It reflects the consensus that addressing the challenge of climate change is an integral part of the need to achieve sustainable development to create a better world for all our peoples -- a world free of hunger, poverty and disease.

At the Millennium Summit of the UN, we adopted a plan of implementation that set the goal of reducing global poverty by half by 2015. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development at Johannesburg just two months ago, we recognized that poverty eradication, changing consumption and production patterns, protecting and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development are essential requirements for sustainable development.

The world has understood the imperative of diversifying energy supply, substantially increasing the share of renewable energy in the total energy mix, and enhancing the use of energy conservation technologies.

India has always argued that strengthening of global cooperation is central to any effort to address global environmental problems. We ratified the Convention in 1993. This year, we took a step further by acceding to the Kyoto Protocol. And we feel privileged to be hosting this important conference, ten years after Rio.

India is deeply committed to the goals of sustainable development. We have one of the most active renewable energy programmes in the world. It involves the public and private sectors, local communities and households. We are among the leading nations in wind power production. We have vigorously promoted the use of solar energy in both thermal and electricity generation modes. We are steadily increasing the share of hydropower and natural gas in our energy mix. We are promoting various energy efficiency measures in the industrial, commercial, governmental and domestic sectors. In this regard, we welcome the operationalisation of the Clean Development Mechanism.

While coal shall continue to be the most important source of energy in India in the foreseeable future, we are promoting many technological innovations in this sector to enhance efficiency and reduce its environmental impacts.

We have to increase the share of advanced energy technologies in our energy mix. Our energy policies are ensuring rapid progress towards market-determined energy pricing.

India accords high priority to conservation of forests and wildlife for long-term ecological and environmental security. The participation of local communities is ensured through the 'Joint Forest Management' programme. I am happy to say that this has helped to increase our forest cover significantly.

While our economy has been among the fastest growing in the world in the last two decades, the major part of this growth is due to the service sectors, including information technology, bio-technology, and media and entertainment.

As the cumulative effect of all these policies and measures, the energy intensity of our GDP has been declining steadily.

Friends, India's contribution – indeed, the contribution of all the developing countries -- to greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere is very little, compared to that of the industrialized countries. This will be the case for several decades to come. Tragically, however, developing countries will bear a disproportionate burden of the adverse impacts of climate change.

Hence, it follows that there is a need to pay adequate attention to the concerns of developing countries on vulnerability and adaptation issues in the Convention process.

Food and nutritional well being are priority issues for all of us. Agricultural sustainability is one of the key areas related to adaptation. Water conservation is another. Weather-related economic losses and deaths have grown significantly over the last few decades. There is a need for strengthening the capacity of developing countries in coping with extreme weather events, which are increasing in frequency and severity due to climate change.

There have been suggestions recently that a process should commence to enhance commitments of developing countries on mitigating climate change beyond that included in the Convention. This suggestion is misplaced for several reasons.

First, our per capita Green House Gas emissions are only a fraction of the world average, and an order of magnitude below that of many developed countries. This situation will not change for several decades to come. We do not believe that the ethos of democracy can support any norm other than equal per capita rights to global environmental resources.

Second, our per capita incomes are again a small fraction of those in industrialized countries. Developing countries do not have adequate resources to meet their basic human needs. Climate change mitigation will bring additional strain to the already fragile economies of the developing countries, and will affect our efforts to achieve higher GDP growth rates to eradicate poverty speedily.

Third, the GHG intensity of our economies at purchasing power parity is low and, in any case, not higher than that of industrialized countries. Thus, the assertion that developing countries generate GHG emissions, which are unnecessary for their economies, is not based on facts.

Friends, India's 5000-year-old culture enjoins us to look at the whole world and all that it sustains – living and non-living -- as a family, coexisting in a symbiotic manner. I do hope that this essential principle of sustainable development would inform the deliberations of this conference and help all the Parties, which have assembled here, to make progress in responding to this challenge.

I wish you well in your deliberations.

Thank you.

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