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## *Noble Laureate Joseph Stiglitz Leads Dialogue on Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability in India*

**New Delhi**—India's future economic development and environmental sustainability are inextricably linked, concluded Indian and foreign experts at a two-day conference led by Joseph Stiglitz, Noble Laureate economist and co-founder and president of the Initiative for Policy Dialogue (IPD) at Columbia University.

The conference examined the linkages between economic growth and the environment in India. Far from the periphery, addressing the country's critical environmental issues is essential for realizing its future growth aspirations. Over-exploitation of critical natural resources, such as land, energy and water, pose substantial challenges that threaten to curb future economic growth and keep people trapped in poverty.

"India's burgeoning economic growth has brought forth major new challenges for environmental sustainability. However, if actions are not taken to address these challenges, the livelihoods of the poor—who stand to reap the benefits of this growth—will be jeopardized," said Stiglitz.

Co-organized by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), the conference included participants from the IPD Environmental Task Force as well as leading academics, policymakers, and other key experts from India and abroad.

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During the two days, participants addressed a wide range of issues related to natural resource and energy management, trade, governance, poverty, and overall economic development in India. A new book by IPD, Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability: New Policy Options, was highlighted at the conference and provides new insights on the common roots of economic stagnation, poverty, and environmental degradation.

Key among the issues discussed included the management of fragile lands in both rural and urban areas. In rural areas, economic growth in the agricultural sector—critical for poverty alleviation—lags behind the rest of the economy. Further, the sector is home to some of the country's largest environmental sustainability problems.

“Improvements in the management of fragile land and water resources, and investments in improving the livelihoods of people living on these lands, are needed for significant poverty reduction,” said Ashok Gulati, director in Asia, IFPRI. “Diversification into food processing and other high value agriculture-related activities and services, will help usher in this transformation.”

The quality of urban settings also remains an area of concern. Despite some recent progress, air quality remains a major challenge in cities throughout India. As urbanization continues to advance rapidly across the country, attention to improving urban environments are needed to bolster living standards.

“Sustainable growth means sustainable cities. More than half of humanity will live in cities in 2007, and India, with the world's second largest urban system, will figure prominently in this scenario. This carries major implications for the viability of future economic growth, infrastructure and social service needs, and overall quality of life,” said Shreekanth Gupta, director, NIUA.

The conference participants also underscored the lack of public consensus and fractured political debates in India that make it difficult to achieve major progress in these critical areas.

Increased public information and dialogue, as well as greater involvement by civil society in monitoring and management, are needed to overcome barriers to reforms.

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Initiative for Policy Dialogue, [www.policydialogue.org](http://www.policydialogue.org)

International Food Policy Research Institute, [www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org)

National Institute of Urban Affairs, <http://www.niua.org/>