



India is doing a great deal on climate change: Saran

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Rajender Singh Negi, OneWorld South Asia



Shyam Saran, Special Envoy to Prime Minister on Climate Change, says that those who think that India is not serious about the issue are “completely off the mark”. He was speaking at a day-long consultation organised by OneWorld Foundation India.



New Delhi: OneWorld Foundation India organised a day-long Consultative Dialogue on “India’s Climate Responsive Roadmap for Development” at India Habitat Centre in New Delhi on July 16.

The purpose of the consultation was to build a multi-stakeholder dialogue among members of civil society, business, academia, media and government, “for a conscientious approach to India’s climate responsive roadmap”, said Naimur Rahman, Director of OneWorld Foundation India, and to urge the government to adopt a more people-centric approach in dealing with the challenges of climate change – both at the national level and at international negotiations.

“This is an important first step towards highlighting intrastate equity issues within climate change discourse while supporting Indian government’s position for a more equitable framework in global negotiations,” he added.

Overriding priorities

Delivering the valedictory address, Shyam Saran, Special Envoy to Prime Minister on Climate Change, said that those who thought that India was not serious about the issue of climate change were “completely off the mark”.

He underlined the fact that India had been already doing a great deal on the issue of climate change and would do whatever it could taking into account the fact that economic and social development and poverty reduction were also the overriding priorities for the country. He added: “We will do whatever we can within the limitations of our resources.”



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Naimur Rahman (left), Director, OneWorld Foundation India and Shyam Saran (right), Special Envoy to PM on Climate Change/ Photo credit: OWSA

He also talked about the government's effort in bringing about a gradual shift from reliance on fossil fuel to renewable sources of energy. "The kind of things that you need to do in terms of energy security are precisely the things that you need to do to deal with climate change," he clarified.

In that he made a particular mention of the promotion of solar energy in the years to come. "We have now finalised a solar energy document and when it is announced, you will see it is very ambitious in scope; it has a very strong R&D component...to really give a punch to the promotion of solar energy."

Energy efficiency

He underlined that India had been one of the best performers in the world in terms of energy efficiency and that reflected in the fact that "over the years that India has been growing at the rate of 8-9% per annum, our energy use has been growing at less than 4% per annum".

He mentioned that Mission Document, which would be made public soon, "posited a 20% further improvement in energy efficiency." Elaborating the point, he said: "If that is achieved, you are saving something like 10,000 MW of power. And for those who are always interested in reducing everything to emissions [should] look at the carbon emissions that you are going to save."

During the speech he also said that India was looking to increase its forest cover from the present 22% to 33% and had plans to convert six million hectares of degraded forest into proper forest...that would "constitute a huge carbon sink".

Earlier Deepak Gupta, Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Government of India in



J.M. Mauskar (left), Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forest, GOI, Navroz Dubash, Senior Fellow,

his keynote address had also said: "We are preparing to have a Solar Mission, where we plan to have ambitious targets for grid and off-grid generation of solar power. We are [also] trying to maximise the harnessing of hydro, biomass and wind power at the earliest."

Centre for Policy Research
(middle) and Shantanu Mitra
(right) from DFID/
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Need for innovation

Gupta urged the industry and business to "innovate, manufacture and operate under a new paradigm with emphasis on conservation and energy-efficiency as also embracing environment-friendly energy resources instead of continuing with the existing fossil fuel-based resources.

He expressed the hope that India would be in a position to deliver "almost 10% of the energy mix by 2020 from renewable sources."

Dr Shreekant Gupta, Associate Professor, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Singapore, put across an interesting case in favour of India extending the 'cap and trade' to the global regime to promote an inflow of investment for low-carbon technologies. Such a stance would also strengthen India's position at the global negotiating table, he added.

"If you actually marry the cap and trade idea with equity, we can put the ball back in the court of the North."

"We, rather than fearing it, should be proactive in it," he added.

The draft summary of key recommendations also made a reference to it: "A cap and trade regime with initial allocation based on per capita entitlements would help promoting investment in low-carbon technologies. The challenge however, is to fix the level of cap and the price at which we trade in the market."

Knowledge portal

The event also witnessed the unveiling of 'Bhoogyan – Integrated Knowledge System on Climate Change Adaptation', an ambitious ICT-based knowledge delivery system to help poor communities adapt to changing climate. Arun Seth, Chairman, British Telecom India, commented: "While technology should be used as an enabler; sufficiency can only come through knowledge."



A participant asking question at the consultation/ Photo credit: OWSA

Shyam Saran, commending and describing it a very good initiative, said: "I am glad that you have launched this knowledge portal...so much of work is being done all over the country...women's self help groups are trying to shift agriculture away from what has been water-intensive, chemical fertiliser intensive, pesticide-intensive to a much more sustainable form of agriculture without losing output or efficiency."

He further said: "The kind of portal which you have developed can become an excellent platform for sharing of these practices...these are very successful stories and we must get them out in public domain. We must try and create platforms, where, through efforts like this, farmers all over the country can benefit."

The project intends to link grassroots communities, development practitioners, academia and policymakers with a view to encourage them to forge new partnerships with the government, domain experts and community-based organisations working with vulnerable sections of society.

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