

National Statement of India
At 3rd Session of United Nations Environment
Assembly by H.E. Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister for
Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Science &
Technology and Earth Sciences
(Nairobi – 5 December 2017)

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to be here in “Green City in the Sun” - Nairobi. I thank H.E Uhuru Kenyatta - the President of Kenya, Dr. Edgar Gutiérrez - Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica and the President of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly and UNEP for organising this meeting.

Friends, we are at a very critical stage in our efforts to combat environmental issues. Protecting mother earth is not just our political or social obligation but it is our moral responsibility. This year

theme of UNEA-3 is “**Towards a Pollution Free Planet**” which needs collaborative and greater action.

Scientific facts and figures clearly indicate that pollution impacts on human health and well beings and ecosystem of this planet and it has long term implications on Sustainable Development Goals. We have only one planet and our urgent collective actions are called for to ensure a healthy environment for present as well as our future generations. Today, there is a common acceptance that a healthy environment is necessary for eradicating poverty taking into full account the legitimate priorities and needs of developing countries and their rights to equitable access to sustainable development for the achievement of sustained economic growth and social progress.

For this important deliberation, we must recollect Mahatma Gandhi’s words as guiding principles: i) Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need, but not every man’s greed; and ii) Be the change you

want to see in the world. And such was his passion, vision and understanding of the environment – back in the days when nationalism overruled any global thinking – that his writings and thoughts are so relevant for almost all present day environmental organizations, campaigns and deliberations.

We believe that the purpose of this Environment Assembly is to enhance cooperation among countries in order to strengthen and support the global response to the urgent threat of pollution.

India has a long history and tradition of harmonious co-existence between man and nature. Human beings in India have regarded fauna and flora as part of their family. This is part of our heritage and manifest in our lifestyle and traditional practices. Paris Agreement on Climate Change has also recognized the role of sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production in addressing climate change. India is committed to putting forward and further propagating a healthy and sustainable

way of living, based on traditional values of conservation and optimal utilization of resources.

Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi, we have launched many policies and institutional mechanisms related to food, water and energy security, climate change, integrating three dimensions of sustainability, and capacity enhancement at national and state levels. These initiatives are a reflection of our commitments to tackle pollution and health related issues. Allow me to mention a few paths breaking initiatives:

- i) Swachh Bharat Mission was launched throughout length and breadth of the country as a national movement. The campaign aims to achieve the vision of a 'Clean India' by 2nd October 2019.
- ii) National Mission for Clean Ganga aim is to clean Ganga and its tributaries in a comprehensive manner and set up various biodiversity centers, crematoria and other

modernizations of Ghats along the banks of river Ganga.

- iii) India's NDC centre around India's policies and programmes on promotion of clean energy, especially renewable energy, enhancement of energy efficiency, development of less carbon intensive and resilient urban centres, promotion of waste to wealth, safe, smart and sustainable green transportation network, abatement of pollution and India's efforts to enhance carbon sink through creation of forest and tree cover.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I shall further elaborate some of these initiatives and programmes that have direct implications on air pollution, water pollution, marine and coastal pollution, and chemical and waste pollution.

1. **Air pollution**

- India is considering to shift to 100 % electric cars

by 2030. This move would reduce the harmful levels of air pollution.

- Focusing on bringing down soaring pollution levels in the country, we launched India's first national air quality index (NAQI) in April, 2015, in over 30 cities to provide real-time data of air pollution on daily basis. The Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) is being implemented "earnestly and meticulously" by the Central Pollution Control Board. A comprehensive 42-point action plan to mitigate air pollution has been issued.

2. Freshwater pollution

- Effective institutions can lead to potentially significant novel approaches in dealing with pollution. Recently in India the Ganges and Yamuna Rivers were granted the same legal rights as a person to deal with the massive pollution affecting these rivers.

3. Marine and coastal pollution

- The National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM), has a vision and mission to aid in the better protection, conservation, rehabilitation, management and policy design of the coast. Recently, India emerged as a world leader with beach clean-up projects across the country.

4. Chemicals and Waste

- The Mount Everest cleaning drive is essentially an Indian Army undertaking, where a team of Indian Army climbers have set off on a mission to bring back at least 4000 kg of non-biodegradable waste from the world's highest peak.
- Government has revised six waste management rules making them more effective, efficient and stringent. These include rules for solid waste, Plastic waste, E-waste, bio-Medical and Hazardous and Construction and Demolition Waste.
- India's largest waste-to-energy plant was

launched at Delhi-Narela in 2017. The project will use 2,000 metric tonnes of waste every day to generate 24 megawatts of energy.

Given the commitments made under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other development agendas, India has been pursuing ambitious plans and expects actions from other developed and developing countries to fulfil their historical responsibilities on the basis of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities. We also believe that contribution of citizens, and promoting sustainable lifestyles are important steps forward to achieve pollution free planet. I am very happy to announce that India will host the **World Environment Day celebration in 2018**. I would like to invite you all to join us in this celebration for our renewed commitments on protection of our mother earth.

Thank You All.....

