

**Comments of Shri N.K. Singh, Member of Parliament, on the Lecture
of Lord Nicholas Stern on Global Warming and Climate Change,
Imperial Hotel - 9th November 2009**

I would like to make a few comments on the broad range of issues covered by Nick Stern and his comprehensive presentation.

First and foremost, we must recognize the complexity of the issues and not force the pace of Agreements and Conclusions prematurely. Copenhagen is not as much an Event as a Process. The goal should be to secure a safe planet than a Treaty for its own sake.

Second, if we use Copenhagen as a trigger, negotiations would need to proceed along five tracks. Mitigation, Adaptation, Finance, Technology and Creating a Vision for long term cooperative action. Mitigation concentrates on near term commitments for cutting emissions, adaptation on efforts to deal with unavoidable consequences of climate change, finance on schemes to pay for emission, technology on framework for advancing and distributing low carbon technology and creating a long term vision on developing a framework which clubs all this together. Each has thorny issues and would need to be resolved.

Third, as far as India is concerned clearly it is in our own interest to take Voluntary Measure on mitigation but this will require a framework for transfer of technology and adequacy financial support. A path which enables development goals to remain un-compromised along with cutting

down intensity of Carbon Emissions needs vastly improved technology and access to assured finance.

I agree with the emerging literature that excessive and exclusive preoccupations with per-capita emissions in relation to international averages have limitations. At the same time given Poverty Compulsions and growth imperatives unless credible technology and finance become readily available moving over to a low carbon emission regime for energy availability will remain a daunting challenge.

Fourth, I share and support some of the recent thoughts of the Environment Minister on the need for Out of the Box approach in which voluntary domestic actions combined with a requisite Legislative Framework goes beyond our conventional position. He has subsequently clarified that these were his first thoughts but the debate embedded in his letter to the Prime Minister raises issues and options that need to be pursued. I also hope that the time frame for enabling new legislation on Voluntary Emission Reduction is not put on back burner.

Fifth, in the evolving literature different emission forms have varied consequences for Global warming and environment. For instance the Black Carbon has a life span in the atmosphere of couple of weeks, it is slightly longer for Ozone arising out of Biomass, burning and volatile organic compounds, and while Methane may stay for a decade. The long life gases CO_2 or Nitrous Oxide may remain for centuries or even a millennium. The short point is that immediate priority must be accorded to low hanging fruits by reduction of Black Carbon and Ozone precursor

Emissions through cheaper technology options. Technology delivery systems and awareness are the key to success. They are also particularly relevant for a country like India where glacial melt down and volatility in rain fall patterns have serious and consequences for mitigation.

Sixth, I also think that excessive preoccupation on Measurement, Verification and Disclosures, important as they are can be distracting. For instance if India has say nothing to hide then making certain disclosure without distinguishing whether technology and finance were exogenously available or not can be counterproductive. Both capital and technology are fungible. But we need greater consensus and awareness on this issue.

Finally the whole slew of domestic regulatory regime on energy and fuel policy needs to be revisited not only for India but globally. Global subsidies on fossil fuel may exceed 300 Billion. Subsidizing use of petrol, diesel and kerosene maximizes incentive for their excessive use and excessive harnessing of water for agriculture. It dramatically reduces incentives for investments and R&D in renewable energy forms. One important aspect of mitigation which should be brought in sharper public focus is the need for a global consensus for phasing out subsidies which incentivises excessive use of fossil fuel. India's own action in implementing the Integrated Energy Policy has been tardy.

It is in recognition of the complexity of the Copenhagen process and many of these inter-related issues in which we need to approach the daunting challenges of Global Warming and Climate Change.