

FICCI Environment Conclave 2008

April 8, 2008, New Delhi

Inaugural Address by Ms Meena Gupta, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India**Mr Ashwin Shroff**, Chairman, FICCI Environment Committee**Dr Prodipto Ghosh**, Honorary Environment Advisor, FICCI and my immediate predecessor in the Ministry**Dr Amit Mitra**, Secretary General, FICCI

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to address all of you at this important platform on sustainable waste management under the aegis of FICCI Environment Conclave 2008. We recognize the significance of waste management as an important national issue and that a platform such as this as being an important driver for not only awareness creation and knowledge dissemination, but also one that brings about partnerships and provides a forum for policy interface and dialogue. Therefore, the Ministry is very happy to support this Conclave.

Waste management is an important aspect of the Ministry's focus at present. We are therefore engaged at present in revisiting the waste management regulations to look at suitable amendments. I am happy to state that the municipal solid waste management rules have undergone the much-desired consultative process for formulating an effective approach through the various amendments being proposed and that practical means and timeframes have been taken into account. The amendments should be announced soon.

In the case of hazardous waste management too, there have been several rounds of consultations and we hope to bring about desired changes with the objective of achieving practicable results and outcomes that the new rules will put in place.

I think the way we view the regulations today is undergoing a paradigm shift. In every sphere of policy-driven activity, the government is increasing looking at multi-stakeholder participation and a process of consultation that involves all stakeholders. The paradigm shift has also occurred by way of incorporating pragmatism in the applicability and implementability of the regulations. Policy and regulations need to adjust to market shifts and become responsive to market demands in a liberalized and globalised economy. And I hope we can achieve the same in the case of waste management, as we realize the significant business and market potential that it can harness.

We also realize the importance of engaging the private sector in waste management operations. Sustainable waste management is a concept that can materialize only if service delivery is linked to private sector participation. It is imperative that the private sector should come forward and also enable the public sector stakeholders to devise appropriate frameworks that results in win-win for both sides. Capacity building would play a key role. The private sector can also play an important role in building the capacities of municipal bodies. The municipalities, on their part, need to provide guidance for selection of appropriate technologies.

I am happy to note that the Conclave covers public private partnerships as a core area of discussion in all sessions. The National Environment Policy 2006 laid a strong emphasis on PPP in every sphere of environmental policy making. The Ministry would be happy to support initiatives that strengthen the implementation of PPP formats.

Another issue that I must mention here is that the urban local bodies (ULBs) and private sector should look at exploring projects that can become eligible for CDM or carbon finance. Today there are only a handful projects from waste management sector under the CDM. As you know, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, in its capacity as the Indian Designated National Authority for CDM is encouraging CDM projects and providing expeditious clearances to projects that meet all the criteria for host country clearance. I do feel there is significant untapped potential in the urban sector, where projects cannot only be developed in waste management but can also be bundled together with other municipal services that have an emission reduction potential.

Recycling is an intrinsic aspect of a sound environmental programme. The 3R Principle - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - is an important aspect of sustainable waste management. I am happy to note that the Conclave has special thrust on recycling. It is extremely imperative that issues of recycling be addressed in this forum - issues of capacity building of recyclers and recycling facilities, integrating the informal sector with the formal sector (some of the points that Mr Shroff has also alluded to), and concerns of recyclers. Recycling is a completely private sector driven activity. The government institutions can facilitate the process of identifying technical and institutional benchmarks for recyclers that can in turn ensure that the right players come on board for efficient and effective service delivery.

I congratulate FICCI for taking a proactive initiative in addressing the important issue of waste management. I am sure this forum would help in a big way in facilitating the public private partnerships that the government so desires.

The government and particularly my Ministry is willing to create a positive intervention in the waste management policy context.

I thank FICCI for inviting me and hope the deliberations would be enriching. I wish the Conclave a great success.