

**ICIMOD-India Day Celebration (30<sup>th</sup> September 2011)**



Smt Jayanthi Natarajan, Minister of State (IC), Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF), Government of India (GoI) inaugurated the one day workshop '*Challenges in Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation – Potential for Collaboration between ICIMOD and India*' on the occasion of first ever ICIMOD-India Day celebration today in New Delhi. The workshop was jointly organized by the Ministry of Environment, GoI and International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), a Kathmandu

based intergovernmental organization of eight countries of the Hindu Kush –Himalaya, which was established in 1983. In her inaugural speech Smt. Natarajan mentioned that this occasion gives us opportunity to take note of ICIMOD's activities in India under various Research & Development initiatives. She highlighted the importance of Himalaya, and emphasized on its vulnerability both on account of specific geological reasons and the stress imposed by increased pressure of population, exploitation of natural resources and other related challenges. Additionally, the region is likely to face increased impacts under changing climate that would greatly affect the very sustenance of indigenous communities in uplands and downstream dwellers as well. She maintained, under these circumstances role and responsibility of ICIMOD as a Regional Knowledge and Information Centre, and the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), especially through G. B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, as a nodal Ministry in India increases several fold. She highlighted some of the recent initiatives of Government of India, particularly with respect to the Himalaya. The beginning made by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in the form of bringing a booklet Governance for Sustaining Himalayan Ecosystem (G-SHE) was highlighted. She emphasized that the governance is the bottom-line for success. Smt Natarajan hoped the outcome of this event will help in creating the required awareness amongst participants about the sensitivity of the Himalayan Ecosystem and provide a forum for knowledge and experience sharing. She emphasized that considering the ecological and socio-cultural sensitivity of the region; ICIMOD and MoEF would require to further intensify their efforts through enhanced cooperation with partner institutions in India. She urged all partners to come forward to strengthen the collaboration with ICIMOD. Smt. Natarajan also released a booklet highlighting ICIMOD-India collaboration, since inception.

Shri Vilasrao Deshmukh, Minister for Science & Technology, Government of India, presided over the function. In his Presidential Address, Shri Deshmukh appreciated the efforts of ICIMOD and Ministry of Environment, GoI, for joining hands to organize this timely event. He stressed on the need for further strengthening such initiatives so as to sustain the Himalayan ecosystem that is important in many ways. While elaborating on the recent initiatives of Government of India for the Himalayan Region, Shri Deshmukh emphasized on the Indian Mission on Sustaining Himalayan Ecosystem. He highlighted the objectives of the mission. Sri Deshmukh mentioned that the actions for achieving the goals of mission have to flow from National Policies supported by strong science base. A strong synergy is required in this context. He underlined the need of effective use of technology for addressing concerns of changes caused by human activities. He felt, the success of the Mission on Sustaining Himalaya would also depend on intergovernmental ties in the region wherein strengthening of collaboration with the

ICIMOD and its partner countries will help achieving the goals of such initiatives in more meaningful ways.

Shri B.M.S. Rathore, Joint Secretary, MoEF, mentioned this is an event of collaboration for mountains, especially the Himalaya which is important in many ways. He indicated Himalaya is being given high priority by Government of India; one such important initiative is the National Mission on Sustaining Himalaya. This mission definitely looks into the issues of transboundary cooperation, he mentioned. He highlighted some of the successful collaborative initiatives including the pilot activities of value chain, and transboundary effort on Kailash Sacred Landscape. This sets good examples of synergizing resources for improving the quality of life in the region, Shri Rathore mentioned. He indicated that ICIMOD, as an intergovernmental independent institution which looks at the regional perspective and brings together a partnership of eight regional member countries and institutions within and outside the region, has played an important role in building an enabling environment through which solutions are tested and suggested for implementation on a scale that will produce tangible benefits for the mountain communities.

Dr. T. Ramasami, Secretary DST mentioned that the collaboration is an essential ingredient of world success. He highlighted the uniqueness and complexity of the Himalaya, and indicated this unique ecosystem can be sustained through effective use of strong traditional knowledge available in the region. Dr. Ramasami stated that the unusual national mission on sustaining the Himalayan ecosystem will draw from the existing traditional knowledge. He stressed the objectives of this mission can be achieved if we follow Gandhian Philosophy of taking only required from nature. He assured all cooperation of DST for strengthening the collaboration we are talking today for the Himalaya.

Dr. Andreas Schild, Director General, ICIMOD, while welcoming the Dignitaries and Participants, thanked Government of India for agreeing to host celebration of first ever ICIMOD-India day. He mentioned that the celebration of ICIMOD days in the member countries has been initiated to take the stock of and highlight the activities of ICIMOD in each country and to broaden collaboration. The first India-ICIMOD day, held by Ministry of Environment & Forests (GoI) and ICIMOD will bring together the current and potential partners and intensify the participation of Indian institutions in regionally relevant and mutually beneficial mandates, Dr. Schild mentioned. He highlighted that the Indian programmers are greatly contributing to address regional issues. Dr Schild stressed on three major sectors, Green Economy, Adaptation to Climate Change, Cryosphere research, wherein greater support is required from Regional Member

Countries, particularly India. He hoped, with this celebration the collaboration between ICIMOD and India for addressing priority issues in the Himalaya will further strengthen. Dr. Schild appreciated and underlined India's initiative for enhanced regional cooperation which would encourage other Regional Member Countries (RMC's) for bringing in enhanced ownership.

Dr. L.M.S. Palni, Director GBPIHED, provided an insight on status of India-ICIMOD collaboration. He specially elaborated on the provisions of MoU between GBPIHED and ICIMOD and its positive outcomes in recent years.

Dr. Eklabya Sharma, Director of Programme Operations, ICIMOD, gave an overview of ICIMOD's current priorities and programmes. The country profile of India in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region was presented by Dr. G. Kinhal, India Focal Point at ICIMOD.

Shri Vivek Saxena, Director, MoEF, while proposing Vote of Thanks, mentioned that the daylong deliberations on thematic issues will bring fruitful outcomes so as to further strengthen ICIMOD-India collaboration. The workshop was attended by over 70 participants representing Senior officials from various ministries and departments of Government of India, thematic experts from different organizations, representatives of international and national organizations, and senior faculty of ICIMOD and GBPIHED.