

**Plenary Session A:**  
**Opening Ministerial Segment**  
**Thursday, 3 June, 9.00 – 12.00 h**  
**Venue: Plenary Hall IKBB**

Internationale Konferenz  
für Erneuerbare Energien, Bonn  
International Conference  
for Renewable Energies, Bonn



## **VOICES FROM THE REGIONS**

**Smt. Sheila Dikshit**

**Chief Minister, Delhi**

Hon'ble Chancellor, Hon'ble Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is indeed a great pleasure to attend the 'International Conference on Renewable Energies' today amidst this very distinguished gathering to discuss a subject that is of the utmost significance for the preservation of this planet for future generations. I am honoured that the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany have invited me on this occasion and extended an opportunity to share my experiences and thoughts. In India's ancient culture, environment has always played a key role in the lives of the people – it has always been a part of religious practices and group commitments amongst communities. Recycling waste has also been a part of the lifestyle of both rich and poor; whether it be the culture of recycling paper, plastic, cotton or the use of leaf plates and earthen pitchers for tea and water.

2. I congratulate His Excellency, Herr Gerhard Schröder, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany for taking the initiative and standing by the commitment made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development at Johannesburg in 2002. I am confident that the deliberations will help to forge new strategies and allow us to learn from the initiatives taken the world over to preserve the environment. A sustainable future can only be built when there is mutuality of interest and a common understanding of the problems and pitfalls that lie ahead. Above all, unless there is people's participation all investment in sustainable development may not elicit the commitment and response that would ensure a secure place for our children in the times to come. The path has been and will continue to be a difficult one but given the will and cooperation of world leaders and the international community we can certainly set a direction that is fruitful and unwavering.

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3. It is significant that we are meeting in Bonn. Not many people realise this city has a history that goes back to the Stone Age. I also have the privilege of representing another very ancient city, Delhi, which has been the epitome of our pluralistic culture and is also the proud capital of the country. Perhaps we could think of building closer links between the two cities in the future. At the same time, unlike Bonn, and perhaps many other cities in Europe, Delhi is expanding at an amazing rate. With increasing employment opportunities, there is a surge of migration into the city which has grown from a population of 1.45 million in 1951 to 9.42 million in 1991 and is now almost touching the 15 million mark - bigger than many countries around the globe. This reflects an all time high decennial growth of 46.31 per cent between 1991-2001 as compared to the corresponding national level growth rate of 21.34 per cent. This has transformed the character of Delhi from a predominantly governmental capital city into a multifunctional, cosmopolitan mega polis with a strong distributive character and opportunities for entrepreneurship, trade and commerce.

4. As you can imagine, growth of a city, not only in terms of population but also as a vibrant hub of economic and commercial activity inevitably has its own unintended impact. Industrialisation and the sharp increase in motorised transport over the last two decades have resulted in damage to the ecological balance and environmental degradation of the city. Increasing air pollution, by way of oxides of Sulphur and Nitrogen, Carbon Monoxide and Suspended Particulate Matter [SPM] levels had given us the dubious distinction of being ranked as the fourth most polluted city in the world. An analysis of the situation revealed that motor vehicles, thermal power plants and small-scale industries were the major sources of the problem. The order of the Supreme Court of India on a public interest litigation directing the immediate closure of hazardous units and relocation of industries operating from residential and non-conforming areas strengthened the hands of the Government. The Government enforced closure of all hazardous units within the city and took up the task of building a new industrial estate for relocating industrial units outside inner city limits in right earnest. On the issue of vehicular pollution, the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi made a compulsory shift to a single fuel, Compressed Natural Gas [CNG], for all public transport vehicles [taxis and buses]. This move was facilitated by an active judiciary, which in the year 2001 directed that all public transport should move on CNG. This was a time-bound programme, which was executed in 18 months. The fight against air pollution in Delhi, which started in 1998 with the switching over to CNG fuel, is now showing results. The levels

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of various pollutants in the ambient air have declined substantially. The city has acquired the unique distinction of having the world's largest eco-friendly CNG Bus Service and was conferred the first Clean Cities International Partner of the Year Award by the Department of Energy, United States of America in 2003. The citizens of Delhi now breathe a much cleaner air and take pleasure in seeing a clear blue sky by day and a clear moon at night.

5. Growing urbanisation has put great pressure on the infrastructure in our city. In ancient cities like Delhi where old practices have been in vogue for centuries, it is difficult to address issues of equity and distributive justice. Water has become a critical issue. Many of us may not be aware but access to water for drinking, washing and cleaning in many parts of the world is a daily struggle which enervates energy and reduces productivity in a large section of our community - particularly women. This is a question that demands our immediate attention as a responsible global community. We have to find sustainable solutions to problems like depleting groundwater, successive droughts and long-term management of our water resources. In Delhi rainwater harvesting during monsoons is increasingly being utilised to recharge the underground water by involving the citizen groups. Through the building bye-laws rainwater harvesting measures in new buildings have been made mandatory. We have also taken up segregation of solid waste into biodegradable and non-biodegradable forms to minimise handling and to recycle waste wherever possible. A scheme to utilise the fly ash generated from the coal fired power-generating stations in making bricks, filling up low-lying areas and in road construction has also commenced.

6. Despite gigantic difficulties and constraints, my own experience tells me that we can find solutions provided politicians, bureaucrats and we, as a civil society, take each other into confidence and respect each other's point of view. In Delhi for the past five years, this has been my endeavour in giving the people a government which places citizens at the helm of decision-making. We have begun a unique initiative called 'Bhagidari', which literally means 'co-sharing' or 'partnership'. Partnership is a very western word, which does not convey what we mean by 'Bhagidari' - a commitment to work together and share the benefits of development in a participative and democratic framework with respect for sustainability. 'Bhagidari' has provided the space and freedom for people to engage in improving the quality of life in a synergistic movement supported by the Government. It has enhanced public

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scrutiny of government functioning and enabled us to work towards policy interventions in support of popular 'empowerment' and of civil society.

7. I am sure, that all of you are aware that, in India, we have just completed a General Election which has brought a new government at the Centre. This has been a historic event in many ways. I do not wish to dwell on the nuances and significance of the verdict of the Indian people except to say that it also endorses the path of sustainable development, which provides hope and confidence to those sections of our people that have been deprived of the benefits of rising rates of growth and access to globalisation. The new Government is determined to change this and ensure that the fruits of development are distributed in an equitable manner. The cornerstone of our approach is that economic growth is important if it helps eradicate deprivation and improves human capabilities and the quality of life of the people. Our people are not merely means of production, they are the ultimate end.

THANK YOU.