

India ' s climate envoy warns of lowered expectations at Copenhagen

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Efforts to achieve a global agreement to address climate change at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December are at a deadlock, Shyam Saran, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of India on Climate Change, told participants at the World Economic Forum ' s India Economic Summit. " There is now a very deliberate attempt to downgrade international expectations and that is unfortunate, " Saran said.

India wants to have " a supportive climate change regime to help us do what we are already doing in our own interest, " added Saran, who last week participated in UN climate change talks in Barcelona, Spain.

" But we are a developing economy. We are not making our action on climate conditional to what anyone else is doing. If we have to do more, then we do need global support. " Any global climate change agreement has to be fair and equitable, he declared. In the run-up to Copenhagen, Saran noted, " the debate has been intertwined with very real fears for the economic prospects of countries. "

The argument that growth is not compatible with environmental responsibility is a " false choice, " argued Lord Stern, IG Patel Professor of Economics and Government, India Observatory, London School of Economics, United Kingdom. Major developing economies such as Brazil, China and India are outlining ambitious and creative climate plans, he remarked. " If the rich world has that deeper understanding, then suspicions that they are doing all these things and others are doing nothing will disappear. " He warned that protectionist measures in the name of carbon-emission reduction would be the wrong response. " The right response is the collaborative one, " said Stern.

Business leaders on the panel agreed. " We should reaffirm the need to approach the problem multilaterally, " said William A. Reinsch, President, National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC), USA. " We need to leap off the cliff together. " Ben J. Verwaayen, Chief Executive Officer, Alcatel-Lucent, France, called on governments to act now. " If we lose momentum and inspiration, we will not just have a postponement of a couple of months. It will go off the table for a long time. We cannot afford it. We need leadership to get it done and business should speak up. "

Instead of blaming each other, countries must collaborate, especially in developing energy-saving technology, renewable energy and alternative fuels. " The innovations will come out of China and India, " predicted Deepak Puri, Chairman and Managing Director, Moser Baer, India. Suresh Vaswani, Joint Chief Executive Officer, IT Business, and Member of the Board, Wipro, India, said that companies should " open source " green technology.

The World Economic Forum is celebrating 25 years of active engagement in India at its annual India Economic Summit, taking place in New Delhi from 8 to 10 November. This year ' s Summit has set a new record for total participation with over 800 leaders from industry, government, civil society and academia from over 40 countries. The theme for this year ' s Summit is " India ' s Next Generation of Growth " .

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