

WELCOME ADDRESS

BY

JUSTICE M.M. KUMAR

President, International Law Association – Punjab, Haryana & Chandigarh Chapter, on the occasion of a symposium on ‘Climate Change – Future Challenges’, held on March 20, 2010 at Chandigarh Judicial Academy, Sector 43, Chandigarh

Hon’ble the Chief Justice Mr. Justice Mukul Mudgal, Justice Surya Kant, Brother and Sister Judges of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Ms. Sunita Narain, Director, Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi and Mr. S.D. Sharma, Senior Advocate and Organising Secretary of International Law Association - Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh Chapter, learned Speakers of the day – Prof. K.K. Garg, Dr. Ishwar Singh and Prof. (Mrs.) Alka Grover, Principals and Professors, who have come in a large number, students of Rajiv Gandhi Law University, Patiala and Army Law School and Members of the Bar.

Hon’ble the Chief Justice is a keen environmentalist and we look forward to his enlightening address.

Ms. Sunita Narain is highly decorated environmentalist. The year 2005 has brought her many laurels. She was awarded Stockholm Water

Prize, by Stockholm Water Foundation, Sweden, and was conferred Padma Shri by the Government of India. She is Editor and Publisher of a Science and Environment Fortnightly Magazine 'Down To Earth'. She has many achievements to her credit.

Amongst us, we have a number of other speakers also. Prof. K.K. Garg of Pec University of Technology, Chandigarh, has been a student of Human Environment Interactions. He was so fascinated after studying the report on the 'Limits to Growth On This Planet' of Club of Rome, that he went to meet the authors of this report in Norway and America in 1983 and 1985. His field of interests have been System Dynamics, Ecology of Mind, Critical, Creative and Systems Thinking. He is currently teaching Introduction to Engineering Design and System Dynamics. He has been Dean, Students Welfare and Training and Placement Officer.

Then we have Shri Ishwar Singh, who is an officer from the Indian Forest Service. He has been serving as Deputy Conservator of Forests, Chief Wild Life Warden, Director (Environment) and Chief Executive Officer of Medicinal Plants Board, Union Territory, Chandigarh.

We have then Prof. (Mrs.) Alka Grover. Her major areas of research are “Organo Chelcogens” – Building Blocks of Pharmaceuticals and “Analytical Chemistry”. Presently she is teaching Environmental Chemistry to the Postgraduate Classes at the D.A.V. College, Chandigarh and also heading the Eco Club of the College. She is working on an awareness campaign for “Zero Wastage and Non-Conventional Energy Resources” for the Chandigarh Administration.

On behalf of ILA, Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh Chapter, I extend warm welcome to all the learned speakers and the august gathering. I am sure that with the presence of such learned Judges, environmentalists and professors, we are going to be richer in our knowledge and better human beings. I also welcome Hon’ble Mr. Justice Surya Kant, who has been Senior Vice-President of the Local Chapter and is an environmentalist himself. I also welcome Mr. S.D. Sharma, Senior Advocate, who has always been on the forefront of any ILA programme.

I on behalf of the ILA also welcome all the Principals, Professors, Teachers and students from various colleges of the Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula. The students of environment have come in large

number from Rajiv Gandhi Law University, Patiala, Panjab University and the Army Law School and other colleges.

The International Law Association is one of the oldest non-governmental organisation incorporated since 1873. The Indian Chapter of the Association is extremely active. The Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh Chapter was initiated in the year 1993. During the last many years the Local Chapter has become vibrant. It has held a number of seminars and symposiums.

The ILA - Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh Chapter felt the necessity of holding discussion on the climate change to create awareness amongst common people through professors. All of you come and contact with large number of people and can spread the message how to save the environment.

On my part, I believe that the principal cause of environment degradation is the way people live these days, especially in the richer and economically developed countries. It looks to be a petty matter but we do not realize that the drinking mineral water from a bottle cost 12 times the energy than the filter water, which you can have from the RO Filter. Amazingly, I have seen in places like Chail, people using mineral

water instead of the water from the local water-falls which carry real minerals. Such a list is unending. The result is that economically richer and developed countries are emitting greenhouse gases in much greater quantity in the atmosphere than their counterparts in less developed countries. According to one estimate of 1996, one US citizen on an average emits there greenhouse gases equivalent to 19 Indians', 3- Pakistanis' and 269 Nepali's.

To some extent it may be true that controlling of emission of greenhouse gases may affect industrialization and economic growth. But yet those who are already developed may have to give way to the poorer countries where millions are struggling to survive.

In order to check greenhouse emission, alternate energy resources have been explored and ways & means are being found to lighten the burden on the traditional energy sector by replacing the fossil fuel.

On January 14, 2010, in a debate in the House of Lords, Lord Stone quoted the example of Delhi and petted the NGO's. He said that in Delhi thousands of tones of grass cuttings, previously sent to rot and emit greenhouse gases in landfills in the suburbs, are now being turned into biomass fuel for cooking in the city. He also quoted the use of solar

panels in Ghana and India and how sugarcane husk and rice husks that were previously wasted, are being used for bio fuel.

I must share with you that when this academy was under construction, we adopted the solar energy for warming water in the geezers, surface lights and for many other purposes. The Department of Alternate Energy Sources of the State of Punjab provided us the infrastructure at extremely subsidized rates. The cost was unbelievably low i.e. 25%.

The big question mark for all of us is would we succeed in controlling deforestation, receding glaciers and costal lines, reducing the melting of Polar Ice Caps etc. or like a helpless individual, we will allow ourselves to destroy the ecology and give a death knell to the beautiful planet earth.

Our rivers and lakes are disappearing. The classical example is the river Yamuna in Delhi. If anyone of you visit Khaziyar 30 years ago, there used to be a beautiful lake, which has disappeared and now there is only a small water body equivalent to the size of a bathtub. Would the future generations be able to see Sukhna Lake flowing in the same manner as we see it today.

With these words, I once again on behalf of the ILA – Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh Chapter, welcome all of you in this beautiful auditorium of Chandigarh Judicial Academy. The ILA will have the sense of fulfillment if this symposium is able to cause awareness among the common people and reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere.

Thanking you.

(JUSTICE M.M. KUMAR)

The International Law Association is one of the oldest non-governmental organisation incorporated since 1873. The Indian Chapter of the Association is extremely active. The Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh Chapter was initiated in the year 1993. During the last many years the Local Chapter has become vibrant. It has held a number of seminars and symposiums.

The present symposium is an effort to create awareness amongst the teachers, lawyers, organizers and common man with regard to climate change, its impact and future challenges. I am going to dwell upon the details as the experts, who are with us, they will enlighten us about the latest developments. As a common man of ordinary prudence, I can say that the weather is becoming more extreme. The Monsoon is delayed and uncertain. The winter is warmer. Thus, there is marked change in the onset of autumn, winter, summer, rain and snow. The effect has been felt globally. Why it is so is a question which our experts are going to answer.

However, as a lay man I have observed that the climate might be changing because of the way people live these days, especially in richer economically developed countries. The power plant that generate energy to provide us with electricity and to heat our

homes, the cars and planes that we travel in, the factories that produce the goods we buy, the farms that grow our food are all contributing in changing the climate by originating 'greenhouse gases'.

Greenhouse effect has been explained by reference to our atmosphere, which acts as a transparent, protective covering around the earth. It allows the sunlight and retains heat. Without the atmosphere the sun's heat would immediately perish of the earth's surface back into the space. The earth would be 30^o Celsius colder and everything would freeze. The atmosphere, therefore, acts like a glass walls of a greenhouse. The experts are going to tell us what is likely to happen if greenhouse gas i.e. Carbon dioxide generated by the human activities is not controlled. What will happen if deforesting, logging, clearing and burning of forests is not stopped. The Tropical forests are disappearing much faster than others at a rate of 10 million hectares a year. For the last 8000 years, the climate has been fairly stable with small changes of less than 1^o Celsius per century. On account of these stable conditions the society and eco system, as it exists today, has developed. Since the climate change has been noticed by the

scientists since 1850, the average global temperature has increased by 0.76⁰ Celsius. The average temperature in Europe has gone up even more by almost 1⁰ Celsius with the fastest rises being recorded over the last 30 years. Globally, 12 of the last 14 years have been the hottest as per record. The top three of years have been 1998, 2005 and 2003 in descending order. If the warming trend on account of greenhouse gases released by human activities continues at the present pace, the experts have predicted that the average global temperature is most likely to increase further about 1.8⁰ and 4.0⁰ Celsius over the course of this century. It could even rise by as much as 6.4⁰ Celsius in the worst case.

Climate change and its effects

- The polar ice caps are melting resulting in rising sea levels.
- The glaciers are retreating all around the world. It would flood low lying islands and coastal areas such as Maldives, the Nile Delta in Egypt and Bangladesh.
- The huge Greenland ice sheet has started melting. It is losing at least 100 billion tones of ice a year.

- The climate change is likely to increase the intensity and frequency of extreme weather such as storms, floods, droughts and heat waves.
- Water is already scarce in many regions of the world and almost one-fifth of the world population does not have access to potable water. If the global temperatures increase by 2.5^o Celsius then half of the population of the world are likely to suffer from water scarcity.
- Tropical diseases like malaria and dengue might spread.

The answer to solve the aforesaid problems would simply be to reduce emission of greenhouse gas to the atmosphere. Therefore, the necessity of taking firm action and reduction in greenhouse gas would require investments and changes to how we produce and use energy.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have been accepted by 191 countries plus the European Union and has been formally accepted by almost all the countries in the world. Its object is to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent

dangerous, man-made interference with the climate system. In 1997, 'Kyoto Protocol' was signed. The treaty committed industrialised countries to reduce or limit their greenhouse gas emissions and reach certain emission targets by 2012.

In the end I would urge some of the suggestions made by the European Commission.

- There should be effort for recycling things because it would require one-tenth of the energy.
- Avoid foods that take a lot of water and energy to produce or transport, such as meat and processed meals.
- Use bottled water sparingly. It is better if you can fit a filter to purify tap water.
- Use your fuel, petrol, electricity and other forms of energy strictly and according to your needs. For example, if you do not need light in your room then switch off the lights. Don't leave your TV, Stereo and Computer etc. on standby mode. Likewise, don't leave your mobile-phone charger plugged in when you have finished charging your phone.

- Don't leave the tap running when brushing your teeth or cleaning dishes. Better use spray taps to save 80% of water.
- Check leakage of water, electricity and gas.
- Buy fuel efficient car. The car with high breed technology may be better suited where in local areas at a speed of 40, the car is automatically switched on to battery instead of petrol/diesel.
- Get your area green by planting trees.

Large number of activities have taken place in the month of December at Copenhagen and some accord was to be reached by January 2010. The expert like Ms/ Sunita Narain, who have been to Copenhagen is likely to share with us what is the result of Copenhagen Conference. Whether the developed countries like US have agreed to cut its emissions. It is interesting to notice that per capita emission by an American is equivalent to 90 Indians', despite our size of population, 30 Pakistanis', 107 Bangladeshis' or 269 Nepali's. We would also learn today as to how any limit of carbon emission would amount to putting limitation on the economic growth of a country.