

Still Time at Warsaw

How can the impact of the Warsaw talks be improved? The Climate Change Conference which started on November 11, 2013 and would end on November 22 at Warsaw is a landmark for taking up issues that are transforming our economies to be greener and cleaner. The welcome statement by Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) set the tone and direction towards sustainable development. So far difficult questions have been asked about carbon emission rise, and areas that were not directly addressed adequately such as enhanced business engagement – including engagement with the coal industry – are now being discussed at Warsaw. Concerted efforts are being made to build cooperative spirit among the developed and developing countries with the result that the poorest countries have finalized and shared comprehensive set of plans to deal with wide range of impacts of climate change. But what is still demanding attention before the conference ends on November 22, 2013 to transform our economies? The following four top the list if we look at local demand:

1. The Delta areas of the world require direct attention. The Nile delta in Egypt, Mahanadi delta in India, or for example Brahmaputra delta in India and Bangladesh are home to some of the most fragile economies. Not only will they suffer from possible sea level rise but also from more salinity ingress, cyclones, floods, and droughts. And these will lead to loss of lives as well as large scale loss of livelihoods of the poor and

farm labour. At the same time the communities in delta areas are taking measures with their own resources, ingenuity, and hard toil to survive and move out of poverty. Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) supported initiative in the Mahanadi delta highlights this struggle. Such efforts and their vulnerability demand global attention so that these communities take up climate smart jobs and livelihoods more fitting to the new economy that we aspire to build. Without focus on livelihoods our economies cannot be transformed to be green and clean.

2. Even more focus is needed on individuals who will be affected by climate change. They are citizens. They have a voice. And their voice must be heard in global events. The new NAMA Handbook is one such step by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Recovery Programme (UNEP) to bring all such voices to the global forum. But how to move from published voices to direct voices in the discussions and decision making? The citizens most vulnerable to climate risk still don't have a substantial and systematic say in such debates and discussions. Warsaw must decide to find a way to do so. The inclusion of the victims in the decision making will lead to effective, open and accountable institutions to address global transformation of economy at local level. The Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction (GFDRR) with its clout of money and expertise has a role to play here.

3. A greater focus on water and food security is needed in coming two days at Warsaw. Right to Fresh Air, Right to Food, and Right to Water have never been under more threat than now because of the direction in which our economies are growing. And this threat is not inevitable. There are other climate smart and sustainable ways for economies to grow. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction's (ISDR) efforts to shape the Hyogo Framework for Action 2 (HFA 2) is narrowing down on building food and water security as one of the best ways to protect the poor who are vulnerable to climate change. Discussions in Warsaw strengthen these efforts.
4. The role of BASIC countries – Brazil, South Africa, India, and China – is becoming crucial. What can they do to accelerate the transformation of global and regional economies? One idea that comes up again and again is their role to make sure that no country is left behind in these discussions and debates on transforming economies. Their regional spread, growing markets, and upward push offer such an opportunity. May be an agency such as Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation have a role to play as an independent but sympathetic third party to work with BASIC countries in developing such inclusive processes.

Time is always in short supply. But it is what we can achieve in the given time that is important. And there is still time at Warsaw to move closer to transforming our economies to be climate smart. This opportunity should not be missed. ■