

**Intervention by Mr. Indra Raj, Commissioner, Ministry of Water Resources of India
during CSD-16 discussion on the Review of CSD-13 Decisions on Water and
Sanitation**

(12 May 2008)

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, we would like to associate with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of G-77.

The poor face significant barriers in their fight against poverty, including access to safe drinking water, basic sanitation, clean and affordable modern energy sources and medical care. In his report, the Secretary-General has correctly emphasized the need for wide-ranging policies for achieving the MDG on safe drinking water and sanitation. We agree that this would also require systematic scaling up of infrastructure, rehabilitation of deteriorated water supply systems, enhancement of capacity building, and ensuring adequate financial support.

Mr. Chairman,

India considers water to be a prime natural resource, a basic human need and a precious national asset that is to be planned, developed, conserved and managed on an integrated and environmentally sound basis, keeping in view national socio-economic needs. This perspective has been incorporated in the 2002 National Water Policy of India, which lays due emphasis on the integrated planning for development and participatory management of water resources, including specific focus on women's participation. Towards this end, the Policy provides for users' associations and local governments to be involved in operation, maintenance and management of infrastructures/facilities at appropriate levels progressively, with a view to eventually transferring the management of such facilities to the user groups /local bodies. An effective monitoring system of water resources projects, including at project level, state level and national level, is in place to ensure optimal utilization of existing resources and keeping adverse environmental impacts to a minimum.

A special focus of our efforts has been towards providing potable drinking water and bringing sanitation facilities within the reach of the poor. This has laid emphasis on NGO involvement as well as local community participation. Specific programmes like the 'National Rural Health Mission', the 'Total Sanitation Campaign', and 'Accelerated Rural Drinking Water Supply Programme' are underway, and have met with notable successes. While the National Rural Health Mission empowers and supports the local governance institutions in managing local health issues, the Total Sanitation Campaign emphasizes increasing the awareness among rural people and generating demand for sanitary facilities. The Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme also envisages control of arsenic, flouride, brackishness and iron, in rural waters.

In an effort to mainstream water and sanitation issues in overall development efforts, the flagship 'Bharat Nirman - Build India' programme includes access to safe drinking water as one of its six core elements. Under this programme, an additional 290 villages are being added to the drinking water supply network **each day!** I am happy to inform that through such ambitious programmes, India is firmly on course to achieve the MDG-7 targets related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation well ahead of the target dates.

Mr. Chairman,

The issue of water sharing is an important aspect of sustainable water resources management. India has been successfully following a policy of bilateral cooperation with its neighbouring countries in respect of all issues related to rivers that cross international boundaries. We are convinced that trans-boundary water issues, including sharing arrangements with neighbouring countries, have to be addressed only through mutual consensus following a bilateral approach, as neighbouring countries are the best judge of their requirements, given available resources.

Thank you.
