



ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SOME PERSPECTIVES FROM INDIA

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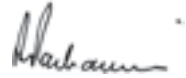
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FOREWORD

Human society has lived for thousands of years within the bounds of development that can be defined as sustainable. However, ever since the beginning of industrialization, there has been a radical shift in production and consumption of goods and services, which has not considered the impacts of these activities on the environment and ecosystems in different parts of the world. Particularly serious is the impact of this trend on the earth's climate and various natural resources. We, therefore, need to bring about a major transition whereby this generation and, more importantly, generations yet to come do not suffer from the ill effects of today's development, which is clearly not sustainable. In simple terms, the definition of sustainable development relates to that form of development which allows the present generation to meet their needs without compromising on the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. If we degrade and damage the natural resources of the earth, we would not be able to derive the services that these resources provide for living, both for humans and other species. For instance, clean air and clean water are biological prerequisites for human beings to survive. However, environmental impacts of various activities are threatening these resources in a serious way.

As a result of these concerns, the human race has to bring about a rapid transition to a pattern of growth and development that is genuinely sustainable. This book, with contributions from a number of highly qualified authors, provides a range of insights into various aspects of environmental impacts that exist today and how they impinge on concepts of sustainable development. To correct the situation, we not only need a new set of policies to be put in place by governments and those in authority, but also a major movement involving people, by which grass-roots support for bringing about change ensures the involvement of all sections of society. Particularly important is the role of business and industry, because some major changes

would be required in the way that goods and services are produced and distributed across the globe, and it is essential that business organizations do not obstruct change because of short-term gains generally associated with profitability in the immediate future. In the ultimate analysis, if change has to take place on the required scale, it would be based essentially on the efforts of every individual in society. To bring this about, we need to first create knowledge on the links between production and consumption patterns and natural resources and ecosystems on one hand, and the spread of awareness on these realities on a large scale on the other. Books of this nature are, therefore, an important part of creating knowledge and spreading understanding on these issues, such that the public and the leaders whom the public supports take the right measures and bring about a reduction in the size of the human footprint on the earth's ecosystems and natural resources. I hope this book will be read by a large number of people, because we in India cannot ignore any longer the damage we are inflicting on the environment and the damage we may be creating by not moving towards a sustainable pattern of development with a sense of urgency.



(R K Pachauri)

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