

**Text of Letter from Jairam Ramesh to the
Co-Chairs of the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel
on Global Sustainability**

Your Excellencies,

Thank you for your letter of May 2, 2011, with your thoughts on our Panel's work and seeking our inputs. At the outset, let me thank you, the Panel Co-Chairs, as well as the Secretariat, for providing such good direction and support to the Panel's work so far. I would like to start by re-emphasising what I said at GSP1: that our panel needs to focus on a set of concrete recommendations, developed in substantial detail, if it has to create impact, and not be relegated to the footnotes of history. I therefore fully share the Co-Chairs view that the Report must focus on the "how", i.e., on specific options to consider and how to get there. Given this context, I take this opportunity to highlight some of the concrete areas where I think the Panel could focus:

- **Indicators/Goals:** As has been discussed, how to take forward the subject of Sustainability Indicators/Goals could be a unique 'value-addition' provided the Panel. Here we must go beyond merely suggesting the need for such Goals/Indicators (which would be merely re-stating what several expert panels / institutions have already stated), and provide as concrete a framework as possible. The championed paper "Sustainable Development: Proposal for a New Indicator", submitted by us (updated copy available at GSP3) discusses in detail one approach that can be taken, and could form the basis for discussion within this Panel. The paper provides possible elements of a multi-dimensional indicator that captures various aspects of sustainability and development, and proposes a methodology on how this can be taken forward. The Panel could use this as a basis for discussion and recommendation in its report.
- **Universal Access to Energy:** The question of energy access is at the heart of every discussion on sustainability, especially for developing countries, where a disturbingly large share of citizens do not have access to modern (and clean) sources of energy. Ensuring universal access to energy in an equitable, inclusive and cost-effective manner is a key moral imperative of our times. The challenge before us is to ensure that this access happens rapidly, while ensuring that the sustainability related

constraints are not violated. This requires tremendous innovation in both technology and policy choices that we make. What are the realistic options before us, and how should we approach this gargantuan challenge? The Panel could do the groundwork for addressing this question, providing a clear roadmap for the global community, international organizations, nation-states, and sub-national units. The championed paper “Universal Energy Access by 2030”, submitted by us (updated copy available at GSP3) provides a detailed assessment of various options before us, and could provide a good background for the Panel to present a roadmap in its final report.

- **Equity:** We all are agreed on the importance of equity in any discussion related to sustainable development, but have varying notions on what it really means. The Panel could take the discourse on the question of ‘equity’ forward, in particular, by clearly bringing out the links between equity and sustainable development. The championed paper “Equity in the Context of Sustainable Development”, submitted by us (updated copy available at GSP3) provides a good starting point for this.
- **Innovative Paradigms**, e.g., the Rights-based Approach: There is much to learn from “good-practices” that have been attempted across the world. As has been suggested by the Co-Chairs, such practices and paradigms must be emphasized both in the main body of the Report, as well as in detailed appendices. India’s Rights Based Approach in service delivery and citizen empowerment in the context of sustainable development (which was presented at the UN-GSP interaction with the International Trade Union Confederation in Madrid in April) provides one such paradigm that could be discussed in the Report.

I look forward to our discussions at GSP3.

Best regards,

Jairam Ramesh
Minister of Environment & Forests, India
15th May 2011