

## **Opening remarks: Prof Hironori Hamanaka**

IGES-TERI AP Dialog on Sustainable Low-Carbon Development in Asia: Prospects for a Successful Future Climate Regime, 22-23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009, New Delhi, India.

Dear Dr Leena Srivastava, distinguished representatives of the government, research and developmental organizations. It is a great pleasure to see you all in this very important event today. It is no exaggeration if I begin by saying that the problem of global climate change has already started changing the way we live our lives, work at offices, and even how we plan about our common future. It has already started challenging our own existence on the Earth and it is us who are behind this mess. This is the very reason why we all gathered here today. Today and tomorrow, we will discuss about how to deal with one of the most significant environmental problem we are facing, and how we can change our developmental patterns so that we handover a much safer Mother Earth to our offspring. It is a moral obligation that we all have to live up to.

At the outset, let me introduce you to our Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, IGES in terms of what we aim to achieve though I understand that many of you may already know to a certain extent. IGES was established by an initiative of the Japanese Government in 1998, as a research institute that conducts pragmatic and innovative strategic policy research to support sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. Since its establishment, IGES has contributed towards understanding and solving of a variety of environmental problems we are facing in the Asia Pacific region which include depleting freshwater resources, forests, air and land pollution, climate change, and unsustainable consumption patterns. IGES believes in that form of strategic policy research that involves both those contributes to the problem and to its solution. While we have a strong research base that relies upon sound analytical and logical research methodologies, we also believe an active outreach that connects the research outputs with those who need them. In line with our overall research and policy advocacy strategy, we have been conducting a number of forums that brings together policy makers, scientists, non-governmental organizations, industry, bi- and multi-lateral donors, and civil society so that pragmatic solutions are identified. The Asia Pacific Dialog is one of such initiatives as a part of which the current round of dialogs is focused on low carbon society to address questions such as where we are heading in terms of our developmental path, what proactive measures are needed to change the course, and what are the challenges and opportunities for achieving a low carbon society. These questions may not be

new. However, what is new is that asking them at a stage when many Asia Pacific countries are aiming to grow at a rapid rate with long term implications to our environment and sustainability.

At this point, let me also make a point that low carbon development doesn't mean a slow development or it doesn't mean that developmental aspirations of developing countries need to be lowered. It only means that we need to achieve the same aspirations with least possible carbon footprint. The picture is not as alarming as one may think. Many developing countries in the region have already started taking significant steps to reduce their carbon footprint. Significant to mention are China and India where policies such as increasing the energy efficiency and aggressive support to renewable energy are being taken up. However, more needs to be done in order to avert what we call the 'tipping point'. It may mean taking difficult decisions while making sure that our developmental aspirations are met. It is indeed a difficult dilemma but not an impossible one. We proved in the past that we can achieve if we take concerted actions, as in the case of the elimination of Ozone depleting gases, and we can do it again. What is required is an international climate regime that is sensitive to developmental aspirations and vulnerabilities of developing countries and a regime that is based on sound principles established under UNFCCC long ago. Whatever the outcome of Copenhagen is going to be, I am sure that it will change the way we managed mitigation and adaptation in the current climate regime. Aspects such as measuring, reporting and verifying GHG emissions, technology transfer, financing, and adaptation are going to gain much more attention than they received in the current regime. This should leapfrog mitigation and adaptation in the developing world to a greater extent. However, there are some challenges we need to overcome for realizing an ideal climate framework. For example, questions have been increasingly asked about the possible negative impacts of bi- and multi-lateral climate cooperation may have on the effectiveness of UNFCCC processes. While many agree that considerable progress has been made on adaptation, technology and capacity building, little progress was made on the issues of financing and mitigation in the recently concluded AWG-LCA meetings in Bangkok (AWG-LCA 7). Most importantly, discussions didn't mature on the aspect cumulative and individual emission reduction commitment of Annex I parties. I personally believe that ambitious target setting by Annex I parties sends out a very good signal facilitating a successful future climate regime. Any such high commitment is only possible if all understands and agrees upon treading the path of low carbon development. Today and tomorrow, we will endeavor to gain more understanding on some of the challenges and try to

identify a way forward. In this light, I am looking forward to engaging and logical discussions on topics we set out in the agenda. With this, I wish you all the best.