

**Speech of Hon'ble Minister of Water Resources
Shri Harish Rawat
2nd Asia Pacific Water Summit
19-20 May, 2013 at Chiang Mai, Thailand**

Her Excellency, The Prime Minister of Thailand, Heads of the Governments of countries of Asia Pacific Region, Excellencies President of Asian Development Bank, Distinguished Guests, Media Personnel, Ladies & Gentlemen!

It gives me an immense pleasure to be here, during the 2nd Asia Pacific Water Summit. Organizers deserve our congratulation for choosing a comprehensive theme “Water security and water related disasters Challenges: Leadership and commitment”. It is my privilege to share my views with this august gathering, comprising of the Heads of the Governments, policy makers, water professionals, researchers, scientists, NGOs and entrepreneurs.

I also express my sincere thanks to the Royal Thai Government, for hosting this Summit in this beautiful city of Chiang Mai in association with Asia Pacific Water Forum, and its international and regional partners.

Excellencies, on this important issue we stand together, after first Asia Pacific Water Summit held at Beppu, Japan in December 2007, we have assembled here to reiterate our commitment to the message from Beppu, for providing clean and safe water, for drinking and sanitation. We emphasize the need to prevent and reduce the risks of flood, drought and other water-related disasters, and to bring timely relief and assistance.

As we are well aware, a sizeable section of the world's population does not have access to safe drinking water. On the other hand, the requirement of water for all purposes, particularly irrigation, domestic and industrial uses, is bound to increase, in view of rapid population growth & urbanization. We have to lay due emphasis, on addressing the developmental concerns, eradication of poverty, as also ensuring environmental sustainability, while planning for future. We have to keep in mind the adverse impact of climate variability, and climate change on water sector, which is a matter of big concern, and it needs a dedicated scientific approach.

This Summit has the guiding theme of “Water Security: Leadership and Commitment” with three policy priority areas, for commitment and change-Development, Shocks and Resilience, and Wellbeing are quite relevant to all of us. These priority areas bring out the fact that water security, food security, and energy security are necessary for economic growth and social stability. These are highly inter-related: food production requires water and energy; water extraction and distribution requires energy; and energy production requires water. Food prices are also highly sensitive to the cost of energy inputs, through fertilizers, irrigation, transport and processing. Thus, water

security is not merely a water sector issue, but also a multi-sectoral need. Sensitizing all the stakeholders, for the imperative need for water conservation and its efficient use, and building consensus on the path to be followed, to achieve water security is an important challenge. This focal point would keep on engaging policy makers.

In this regard, I am glad to share with you that, the Government of India is celebrating 2013 as 'Water Conservation Year', which put greater emphasis on creating public awareness, for efficient use of water, and its conservation.

Another area of concern is increasing trend in water related disasters, such as impacts of flood and drought. While every effort should be made to avert water related disasters, like floods and droughts, through structural and non-structural measures, emphasis should be on preparedness for flood / drought, with coping mechanisms as a superior option. Greater emphasis should be placed on rehabilitation of natural drainage system, and implementation of water security plans. The Government of India has brought in a paradigm shift, in the approach towards disaster management, from relief centric to a proactive regime, that lays greater emphasis on preparedness, prevention and mitigation. The new approach proceeds from the conviction that development cannot be sustainable, unless disaster mitigation is built into the development process, and made multi-disciplinary, spanning across all sectors of planning and development. In India, Institutional, legal, financial and coordination mechanisms at the national, state, district and local levels have been set up for holistic management of disasters, including water related disasters.

The National Water Policy(2012) of India, addresses the present challenges of the water resources sector. The Policy strongly recommends Integrated Water Resources Management, taking river basin/ sub-basin as a unit. It also lays emphasis, on arresting declining ground water levels in over-exploited areas, by introducing improved technologies of ground water recharge measures, and also encouraging community based management of aquifers. The policy further recommends, incentivizing efficient water use, recycle and re-use of water. The need for institutional reforms, such as setting up of Water Regulatory Authorities, restructuring of State Water Resources Departments etc., have also been highlighted in our National Water Policy. The commitments of our Government, to provide safe drinking water, adoption of climate change resilient technologies, dissemination of water information among stakeholders, through Resource Information Systems, have also been reiterated in our policy framework. Developing water efficient systems in various sectors, particularly in agriculture, is another priority areas of water governance, and an important goal in our National Water Mission.

Effective transfer of technology & knowledge, and sharing of experiences, among developed and developing countries and their implementation, need to be promoted to further the cause of efficient water management, and attainment of water security. I am sure, the deliberations of the Summit and the Technical

Workshops, would facilitate in evolving new ideas, and innovative thinking, as well as the best practicable solutions. I am also confident that the outcome of the Summit, would evolve the guiding principles, for all the participating countries, for efficient water resource management. It also will bring out a comprehensive road map, for international cooperation in water sector, in line with the objectives of 'International Year of Water Cooperation', 2013, as declared by the United Nation.

It is heartening to note that the Summit has served as a land mark event, bringing together leaders from the Asia-Pacific region, to showcase their leadership in decision-making, as well as excellence in practice and innovation; to discuss concrete results, that have had substantial impacts, spanning from policy down to the grass root level implementation. We will certainly agree on joint priorities, and define our commitments, in preparation for future collaborative activities.

Thank you.