

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The climate of our planet, earth, is always in a state of change. In the past it has altered as a result of natural causes. In more recent times, climate change refers to the changes we've seen over the recent years and those which are predicted over the next 80 years, thought to be mainly as a result of human behavior rather than natural changes in the atmosphere.

The greenhouse effect is very important when we talk about climate change as it relates to the gases which keep the Earth warm. It is the extra greenhouse gases, which we the inhabitants have released that are thought to pose the strongest threat. The build-up of greenhouse gases (GHGs) threatens to set the Earth inexorably on the path to an unpredictable different climate.

One of the main GHGs, which is being added to the atmosphere, carbon dioxide (CO₂), is increasing rapidly. Around the year 1750, at the start of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, there were 280 parts per million (ppm) of CO₂ in the atmosphere. Today the overall amount of GHGs has topped 390 ppm of CO₂ and the figure is rising by 1.5–2 ppm annually.

Evidence suggests that many parts of the planet will be warmer. Droughts, floods and other forms of extreme weather will become more frequent, threatening food supplies. Plants and animals, which cannot adjust to this change, will die. Sea levels are rising and will continue to do so, forcing hundreds of thousands of people in coastal zones to migrate.

Ecological changes are also taking place due to these climate changes. These are linked with changes in Rodent population, bleaching of the coral reefs due to the warmer temperature of sea water and changes in the precipitation patterns in the world.

Global warming causes severe weather swings. Floods in China and India in the last few years indicate that Global warming will result in greater precipitation. However, the issue is not as much with more rains than it is with location and patterns in which precipitation is envisaged. Global warming paradoxically does not only cause more precipitation, it causes more droughts as a result of changes in the location of the precipitation, resulting in severe floods at one end and droughts at the other.

We are witnessing a collision between our civilization and the Earth and there are three factors which are causing this collision. These are;

- Population

World population has increased at a phenomenal rate; it is now over 6 Billion. This population explosion indicates a significant difference from the trends of the past. As the population is increasing, we are putting profound pressure on the Earth and its resources like food, water & other natural resources. This is one of the reasons for the devastation of forests.

- Scientific Advancement

The scientific and technological revolution is a great blessing as it has given us tremendous benefits in areas like medicine and communications. But this new power that we have also brings a responsibility to consider its consequences. We cannot mindlessly continue with our patterns of the past. We have always exploited the earth for our sustenance but with the advancement of science; our capability to transform the earth has increased many folds. Making mistakes in our dealing with nature can have

bigger consequences, as our technology is often bigger than the human scale. When we put this all together, we are a force nature has to reckon with.

- Thought Process

Our thought process is the third factor, which transforms our relationship with our planet. Inaction on our part, despite the evidence around us, is the greatest obstacle to dealing with the situation. We need to take action and respond to the climate changes around us, rather than have to react to these at a latter stage.

We cannot consume the world's resources without regard to its effect, for the world has changed and we must change with it.

Ladies and Gentlemen, what we need to understand is the need for sustainable development and that is, meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their requirements.

On a global scale, we have clearly damaged the earth, thickened its atmosphere and are now paying for its consequences – hurricanes, floods, droughts – it's already started.

The challenges are certainly immense and the threats are real. Each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

We need to harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. Luckily Pakistan has plenty of wind and sun, and we really should be coming up with a new energy policy given the current scenario. This will also create new jobs and opportunities.

Although Pakistan is not a major contributor to climate change and is somewhere in the bottom of the list of greenhouse gas emitting countries, we will definitely suffer the consequences. In fact, according to the UN, Pakistan, as a country, will be the 12th biggest sufferer of climate change. It is now an established fact that along with unpredictable weather patterns, glaciers are melting all around the world. Two thirds of our water in the Indus River, the country's lifeline, comes from melting glaciers. This means less and less water in the years to come. We have to start contingency planning right now!

The Ministry of Environment has initiated a series of planned activities for engaging all stakeholders and beneficiaries towards the common goal of promoting awareness about environmental issues. There is a particular need for strengthen our environmental management to reduce the risk to health and natural resource productivity, and to sustain economic growth. At present, we need to learn from our past, design realistic priorities for the future and strive to achieve them in a sustainable manner. The scale of the problem is too large for the government to address alone. There is a need for collaborative efforts by donors, government machinery, NGOs, private sector and the media. Together we can overcome the vast challenges that daunt us and threaten our livelihoods.

Look at Earth, everything that has happened in all human history has happened on this planet, all the triumphs and all the tragedies, all the wars, all the famine, all the major advances. This is our only home and "Our ability to live on planet Earth and to have a future as a civilization" is at stake. I believe that this is a moral issue & it is time we seized the initiative.

We hold climate change and related issues at an arm's length because if you recognize this issue, the moral imperative to ignore it is inescapable. Hence a need to collectively take a moral and ethical view on this burning issue and prepare in time. Making mistakes in generations and centuries past would have consequences that we could overcome. We don't have that luxury anymore.

Future generations may well have a case to ask themselves “what were our parents thinking”. Why did they not wake up when they had a chance?

It is abundantly clear that climate change needs urgent attention. The challenges for 2009 are huge – but there are also huge opportunities. We have abundant knowledge on effects of climate change. Now the key question is ... what do we do and how do we contribute?

Separating the truth from the fiction and the accurate connections from the misunderstandings is part of what we learn in summits like these. When we learn that the warnings are accurate and based on sound science, then we as human being have to find a way to make sure that the warning are heard and responded. That is what our role is.

There are a lot of people who go from denial to despair without pausing at the intermediate step of actually doing something about the problem. That is what I would like to finish with, that we already know everything we need to know about effectively addressing this problem. We need to do a lot of small things, not one i.e., If we effectively use energy efficient appliances at our homes and at our factories, use high mileage cars, renewable technologies, all these add up to bring us lower than our emissions of 20 years back. We have the ability to do this. We just need to have the will and courage to do this.

Each one of us is a cause of global warming. But each one of us can make choices to change that. With the things we buy, the electricity we use, the cars we drive. We can make choices to reduce emissions to a substantial level. The solutions are in our hands. We just have to have the determination to make it happen.

OICCI, which is the representative body of foreign investors in the country, is proud to have joined hands with LEAD Pakistan in paving the way for developing this understanding in the corporate sector in Pakistan and I wish this summit every success.

Thank you