

## Press Release

### India to be open defecation free by 2 October 2019: Parameswaran Iyer, Secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation



*Shri Parameswaran Iyer, Secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Government of India delivering Keynote Address at the consultation. Also seen in picture (from left to right) are Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, RIS; Mr. Yuri Afanasiev, UN Resident Coordinator, India; and Dr. P.K. Anand, Senior Consultant, NITI Aayog.*

Shri Parameswaran Iyer, Secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Government of India, while delivering Keynote address at the National Consultation on SDGs: Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for all focussing on SDG 6 said, “Water management is a broad topic which needs to be looked at holistically. The present government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a particular focus on providing clean drinking water to all. To solve the water issues there is felt need to look at traditional methods of water conservation in addition to the new technology. There is need to mainstream traditional methods and involve communities.” The consultation is part of series of consultations organised by NITI Aayog in collaboration with Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and UN in India as partner.

Further, Shri Parameswaran said that clean drinking water cannot be made available to all unless sanitation is made available to all, faecal matter being of the major water contaminant. He talked about PM Modi's Swachh Bharat Mission which is the flagship programme of the government. He said that meeting the target of SDG 6 is crucial for India as around 500-600 million people in India practice open defecation and if this number is not brought down then SDG 6 will fail globally. He also added, “India aims to be open defecation free (ODF) by 2 October 2019 which marks the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.”

Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, Founder, Sulabh Sanitation and Social Reform Movement shared his rich experiences and said, “Sulabh movement is making an all-out effort to realize the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He also mentioned: “We are making efforts to

build a broad alliance of politicians, corporations, NGOs and civil society to spread awareness on the Swachh Bharat to evolve it into people's movement and turn the vision of ODF India into reality."

"Water demand in India will increase to around 1200 billion cubic meter by 2050. India is bound to face severe water scarcity, thus there is need for proper planning, management and technological use," said Dr. V.K. Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog. He added that there is need to introspect if we are harnessing all the technology.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. P.K. Anand, Senior Consultant, NITI Aayog, said that drinking water is priority of the present government but agriculture is not left behind. He emphasised on price rationalisation mechanism for water conservation.

"Food, fuel and water are three elements that define our survival and security. The population is growing we are over using our resources but water management and recycling are lagging behind. Over two million tonnes of human waste is dumped in water resources globally. There is conflict and competition over water," said Mr. Yuri Afanasiev, UN Resident Coordinator, India while making welcome remarks at the consultation. Mentioning that India has achieved MDG target he said SDG targets are much more ambitious and thus there is need for combination for big steps – policies – and small steps – people's participation to meet SDGs. He also underlined that "India is a net exporter of virtual water and is in the club of US, Canada and Argentina and thus there is need of policy intervention."

"Water is a great Challenge and thus it is crucial as to how we develop our national agenda. There is need for technological solutions as there are cross domain as well as cross-border linkages among the SDGs that require holistic approach. There is sectoral concern too as to how we use water in agriculture, industry, energy production and for human supply," said Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, RIS. He also emphasised on driving lessons from traditional methods of water conservation.