

**Keynote Address of Shri Kapil Sibal,
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on

**"Investing Out of the Crisis and Attaining
International Development Goals"**

**on 8th October, 2009 at 1000 hrs
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at the 35th UNESCO General Conference held in Paris**

**Distinguished Delegates from Member Countries, UN Bodies and Donor
Agencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. It is a signal honour for me to be the Keynote Speaker in this august forum. We gather here in the aftermath of the havoc caused by the global economic crisis. Many economies feel that the worst is over; that the signs of revival may soon bring cheer. While there are indications that the global economy is picking up and that the economic downturn may end sooner than later, lives of millions have already been devastated. Those hit hard by the crisis, continue to struggle to lead a life of human dignity and respect. Ironically, those who contributed least to the crisis are the most severely affected. Some warn us of the "lost decades for development" which could have catastrophic consequences for both the rich and the poor.

2. In the wake of the crisis the global economy witnessed unacceptable inflation in food items and commodities. This along with the impact of global warming negatively affected trade. The shrinking demand in the developed world, which continues, has impacted millions dependent on the buoyancy of

export markets. Private capital flows to emerging economies are projected this year by the Institute of International Finance, to be down by 82 per cent from the boom year, 2007. The World Bank considered the crisis as a "development emergency", with the developing economies losing access to \$700 billion. The "lost generation," with added deaths of 1.5 to 2.8 million infants by 2015 might be a stark reality. Annually, over a 100 million people are expected to be tipped into extreme poverty for the duration of the crisis. **UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon** recently warned that the international community, "should not lose sight of the challenges and plight of hundreds and hundreds of million of the poorest people of the developing countries who have been impacted by this crisis." The hardship triggered by the crisis, impacting the least developed, calls for strong public policies and investment programmes.

3. The present economic crisis has further strained the public exchequer in many countries leading to reduced public spending in the social sector adversely effecting on the progress of their development goals. This jeopardizes progress towards the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs), in particular those adopted at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development and the UN Millennium Summit.

4. As we struggle to survive, the stark reality is that today hundreds of thousands of people, particularly women and children, die of malnutrition and lack of basic health care facilities. Almost a billion people around the world are illiterate; more than a billion struggle to survive on less than a dollar a day; one in five children aged between six and eleven are out of school; one in four children drop out before completing the basic education cycle. The

uneven and unjust pattern of development in most nations is not conducive for a prosperous, peaceful and sustainable future. It is here that the United Nations' system and UNESCO in particular, can play a significant role in helping to evolve a more peaceful, just and equitable world order where every human being can live with dignity and respect.

5. Despite the crisis we must continue our efforts towards the MDG's. By now we know what works and what does not. The value of public expenditure and international development aid, though critical, are no longer the determinants in reaching our goals. The uneven progress of developing societies towards the MDG's is not only attributed to the size of physical capital, the quality of natural and human resources and the content of available modern technology; of equal importance is the role of enabling institutions and the existing socio-political climate. The nature and quality of institutions and the level of political commitment play a key role to make development inputs, including public expenditure and international assistance, more efficacious.

6. The world economy has undergone many important changes in the last few decades. The following three realities may be noted :-

- (a) global economies being truly interdependent;
- (b) new and more efficient technologies ;
- (c) need for action on global warming and climate change.

7. The last few decades have demonstrated that global economies are truly interdependent and are becoming increasingly integrated. This is as exemplified by cross-border manufacturing processes, business process

outsourcing and international trade in services. Consequently, the impact of change in a country or region has global ramifications. Global integrated economies require globally integrated societies. The 'demographic dividend' in some regions must not be allowed to turn into a 'demographic nightmare'. A globalized world, will ultimately require the outsourcing of human skills in regions which will witness a 'demographic deficit'. Skilled human capital will have to be imported to certain regions to sustain economic growth. In that sense the developed world has a huge stake in ensuring that the human resource available in large numbers in developing economies is adequately empowered by investing in their education and skill development. Education for All(EFA) must become a reality through collaborative efforts.

8. To meet the requirements of EFA and to provide secondary and vocational training to the youth, we require millions of teachers. The young may be hungry for learning, but we may not have quality teachers to ignite their minds. The social order must respect teachers who all play a pivotal role in building a peaceful and just society. I would like to call upon UNESCO to commence a world-wide campaign to restore the respect of a teacher in society. It would be in the fitness of things if we all take up a "Teachers First Campaign" aimed at restoring respect for this noble profession.

9. New technologies have changed the way we live and work. They present real challenges but have enormous potential. Information and communications technologies have transformed the world in the way information can be accessed. Intellectual inputs and knowledge, are available at the students doorstep. ICT can transform societies if used in the field of education and other social sectors. Technology provides us a neutral

platform to bridge inequities. In India, technology has been the harbinger of change. The green revolution led to improved farm productivity and increase in rural incomes in the late sixties. Subsequently, use of modern and appropriate technologies through our national missions for telecommunications, drinking water supply etc. have brought considerable improvement in the lives of the poor and marginalized sections of society. Our "Science for Equity Empowerment and Development (SEED)" programme seeks to provide opportunities to motivated scientists and field level workers, to take up action oriented and location specific projects aiming at socio-economic upliftment of the poor and disadvantaged sections, through appropriate science and technology interventions especially in the rural areas. I would urge UNESCO to start a similar global campaign leveraging scientific knowledge for societal benefit. I am happy to state that we in India have made major progress in ICT and have also developed e-learning materials. We would be glad to share this knowledge with the world community.

10. Now I came to the third important development which needs urgent attention : global warming and climate change. In my view, education, particularly higher education, must inculcate the values of sustainable development in the minds of our youth. While planet earth has provided an average per capita footprint of 1.76 Hc, developed countries have been using a footprint much beyond the above per capita entitlement. It is ironic that both in the past and currently the developed world, with higher human development indexes, had and have unsustainable lifestyles and consumption patterns. Education instead of becoming an instrument of sustainable development, has become a major cause for unsustainable lifestyles. If

developing countries adopt and imitate Western styles of production and consumption, it is estimated that we would need four times the resources planet earth provides by the year 2055 to sustain us. It is, therefore, imperative that developing countries adopt, and adapt to, sustainable lifestyles, as they implement their development strategies. Meanwhile, developed countries will have to reduce their carbon footprint while ushering more sustainable life styles.

11. What we need is a drastic change in the development paradigm. The international community must find ways and means to discourage over consumption in general and wastage in particular. Over exploitation of the resources to sustain current patterns of consumption does violence to nature. The Mahatma's messages of non-violence assume relevance even in the area of sustainable development. He said that the earth provides enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed. Considering the significance of his message, I must thank UNESCO and in particular the Director-General, Mr. Matsuura and all his colleagues for their interest in our proposal to set up the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development as a Category - I Institute of UNESCO in India. I hope that this proposal will be approved by the General Conference, for the Institute to spread the message that unsustainable development will breed conflict and that sustainable development is a necessary pre-requisite for peace.

12. The growing recognition of the need for global cooperation to tackle challenges of development and realization of human rights for all, culminated in the conceptualization and adaptation of the UN Millennium Declaration in

September 2000 and the Dakar Declaration on Education for All. The global community realized that the challenges of development and the fostering of human rights cannot brook any further delay and that a global commitment was necessary. The Millennium declaration includes eight international development goals that build on agreements made at major UN conferences and represent commitments of both developed and developing countries for promoting the quality of life in our global village. The declaration, endorsed by 189 countries, was then translated into a roadmap setting out goals to be reached by 2015.

13. The first seven goals, as we are aware, focus on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; and ensuring environmental sustainability. The eighth goal, perhaps the most critical of all (as it envisages translation of political commitments of both developed and developing nations into action for achieving the first seven goals, as endorsed at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico in March 2002, and again at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in August 2002), calls for the creation of a global partnership for development, with targets for aid, trade, and debt relief. While significant steps have been taken by the international community during the last decade, regions and individual countries have experienced uneven levels of progress towards these goals. What is more disturbing is the fact that some regions and developing countries which began with a large deficit in these goals in 2000 continue to lag far behind others.

14. As we are all aware, at the global level, significant progress has been made towards achieving the millennium development goals, particularly goals related to education (goals 2 & 3). The concern however, is the slow pace of realization in most low-income countries. While most countries in Asia have made headway in reducing extreme poverty and hunger, we see little progress of this in Sub-Saharan Africa.

15. Steady progress in participation in primary education across the globe keeps the hope alive for achieving universal primary education, a pre-condition for improving gender equity in secondary education.

16. As mentioned by me earlier, apart from physical capital, natural and human resources and modern technology, the nature of political commitment and the key role good governance plays in achieving the development goals cannot be minimized. I am happy to inform that a significant initiative reflecting the political commitment of the Government of India to universalize 8 years of schooling, has recently been translated into action by making elementary education a fundamental right of every child in our country. With the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, every child between the ages of 6 to 14 years now has the right to free education. The Act while acknowledging the participation of private education providers seeks to ensure that equity and quality go hand in hand with improved access.

17. Regarding Universal Elementary Education, the Government of India had launched in 2001 its flagship programme Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) which is implemented by the Central Government in partnership with State Governments.

18. India recognizes that the task of nation building, reducing poverty and ensuring education for all, cannot be met without a large stock of human capital equipped with quality knowledge and skills, to foster a knowledge society. Accordingly, universalisation of secondary education and significant expansion of higher education are priority areas for implementation. Plans have been delineated and goals set for growth of high end scientific and technical institutions alongside vocational training to equip our youth meet the challenges of a globally competitive environment.

19. Even with impressive growth in India during the last decade, poverty continues to be concentrated in rural areas and in less developed states.

20. India has incorporated integrated sustainable development into its planning process. It is based on the appreciation of the close links between poverty and environmental degradation and the harmful effects felt by the poor who depend on land as a means for their livelihood. Sustainable development for India is embarking on a development path that includes making the right choices for sustainability. Mahatma Gandhi, had articulated a similar concern much before the discourse on sustainable development assumed its present relevance. In the late 1920s, he warned, "God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West...If an entire nation of 300 million took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts".

21. While member states undertake to address the challenges of climate change and sustainable development, it is necessary that adequate efforts are made to find appropriate technology responses to some of these issues. The effective use of science and technology for building a Green society and

embracing a Green Economy cannot be realized without collective efforts at the global level for development and transfer of appropriate technologies and skills both through North-South and South-South cooperation. Similarly, as mentioned by me earlier, member states also need to seriously address the issues of unsustainable consumption patterns and habits.

22. A major task for all of us is to further improve capacity development and public service delivery mechanisms, at all levels, in order to implement the internationally agreed development goals. We must also work towards social, economic, and political inclusion and reduction of regional disparities. This requires concerted efforts to promote greater access to vulnerable sections for basic services, opportunities for decent work, and participation in decision-making. Commitment of governments for enhanced public expenditure setting up of transparent, accountable structures and ensuring efficiency of institutions, along with use of modern and appropriate technologies combined with partnerships involving the private sector and "not for profit institutions" will help us translate our vision and strategies for achieving the MDGs. The task is incomplete, the journey unfinished.

Thank You.