



**ADDRESS BY  
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IN INDIA**

**WORKSHOP ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

**ORGANISED IN PARTNERSHIP  
JNU - HABITAT - UNDP**

**VALEDICTORY SESSION  
12 APRIL 2002**

**JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI**

- GOOD AFTERNOON,
- VICE-CHANCELLOR ASIS DATTA, PROFESSOR MATHUR, SECRETARY KRISHNAN, UN COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS ALL,
- I'M DELIGHTED TO BE HERE AT THE CONCLUSION OF WHAT I UNDERSTAND HAS BEEN A VERY STIMULATING TWO-DAY WORKSHOP ON THE IMPORTANT THEME OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE.
- I'M DEEPLY IMPRESSED BY THIS GATHERING OF RESEARCHERS, SCHOLARS, AND ON-THE-GROUND PRACTITIONERS.
- MOVING FORWARD IN THE ARENA OF STRENGTHENING DECENTRALISATION, REQUIRES CONTINUOUS INTERFACE AND SHARING OF EXPERIENCES BETWEEN RESEARCH AND ACTION.
- SO I SEE THIS WORKSHOP AS PART OF OUR ONGOING EFFORTS TO PROMOTE DIALOGUE AND GLOBAL EXPERIENCE SHARING ON DECENTRALISATION THAT WORKS.
- AS MANY OF YOU ARE AWARE, STRENGTHENING DECENTRALISATION IS ONE OF THE TWO KEY THEMES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA'S UN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FRAMEWORK, ALONG WITH PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY.
- WE ARE ENGAGING KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN DIALOGUE ON DECENTRALISATION.
- THE FIRST SUCH CONSULTATION HELD IN DECEMBER 2000 IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PLANNING COMMISSION, WORLD BANK AND SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FOCUSED ON RURAL DECENTRALISATION.
- THE SECOND CONVENED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF MADHYA PRADESH IN BHOPAL FOCUSED ON URBAN ISSUES AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES.
- THIS ONE WITH JNU AND UN HABITAT REALLY ADDS ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH FLAVOUR AND COMPLETENESS TO OUR CONSULTATIONS.
- I'M GLAD TO SEE THAT A FULL SESSION WAS DEVOTED TO 'GENDER AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE'.
- GENDER IS INDEED A CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE, PERMEATING ALL THAT WE DO.
- THE DECENTRALISATION MOVEMENT IN INDIA REALLY TOOK OFF AFTER THE PATH-BREAKING LEGISLATION ON PANCHAYATI RAJ.

- SINCE THE 73<sup>RD</sup> AND 74<sup>TH</sup> CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALISATION HAS BECOME THE GOVERNING PHILOSOPHY IN INDIA ---
- AS OUR UNDP ADMINISTRATOR, MARK MALLOCH BROWN CALLED IT WHEN HE WAS HERE LAST TIME, "...THE WORLD'S LARGEST EXPERIMENT IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY."
- WHAT AN EXCITING HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY TO BE PART OF!
- MUCH OF THE DEBATE ON DECENTRALISATION HAS CENTRED ON A CHICKEN-OR-EGG SITUATION, NAMELY CAPACITY-FIRST-FUNDS-LATER, OR FUNDS-FIRST-CAPACITY-LATER.
- I'M HAPPY THAT THE DELIBERATIONS OVER THE PAST TWO DAYS, RATHER THAN GETTING BOGGED DOWN WITH THIS DEBATE, HAVE FOCUSED ON ISSUES OF PARTICIPATION, TRANSPARENCY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO MAKE DECENTRALISATION EMPOWERING.
- I REALLY LIKE THE IDEA OF RE-VISITING THE 'TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS' OF SELF-GOVERNANCE WHICH HAVE EXISTED IN MANY PARTS OF THE COUNTRY FOR LONG --- LIKE THE VAN PANCHAYATS AND VILLAGE COUNCILS.
- WE ALL KNOW THAT LOCAL GOVERNANCE IS NOT A NEW IDEA...ESPECIALLY IN THE LAND OF THE MAHATMA'S VISION OF VILLAGE REPUBLICS, TRUE GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY!
- THIS WORKSHOP PRESENTED A FORUM TO TAKE STOCK OF SOME OF THE INNOVATIVE WAYS OF GOVERNING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.
- SHARING OF BEST PRACTICE BOOSTS THE CHANCES OF SUCCESS --- ESPECIALLY, IF SOME OF THESE LESSONS HELP ENSURE THAT PEOPLE CAN VOICE THEIR NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS TO AN ACCOUNTABLE LOCAL BODY.
- 70% OF INDIA'S POPULATION LIVES IN RURAL AREAS, WITH 250,000 RURAL PANCHAYATS.
- YET WITH ONLY 3,700 URBAN LOCAL BODIES, DECENTRALISATION DISCOURSE OFTEN LOSES SIGHT OF THE URBAN-SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF DECENTRALISATION, AS WELL AS RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES.
- AS INDIA MOVES TOWARD INCREASED URBANISATION WITH ALL ITS CHALLENGES, WE MUST ALSO ADDRESS URBAN-SPECIFIC DECENTRALISED GOVERNANCE ISSUES.
- I'M GLAD THE WORKSHOP FOCUSED ON THIS ASPECT EQUALLY.
- DECENTRALISATION IS ALSO ABOUT MOVING DEVELOPMENT PLANNING CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE IT AFFECTS.

- DECENTRALISATION MEANS HELPING PEOPLE EMPOWER THEMSELVES TO GOVERN EVERY DAY CONCERNS AND ISSUES THAT MATTER MOST TO THEM – LIKE EDUCATION FOR THE GIRL CHILD, AFFORDABLE QUALITY HEALTH CARE, EASY ACCESS TO MARKETS.
- A BIG CHALLENGE IS BEFORE US IN TERMS OF BUILDING CAPACITY OF THE PANCHAYATS --- WITH OVER 3.4 MILLION ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES --- ONE THIRD WOMEN --- AND WITH AN INCREASING NUMBER OF RESPONSIBILITIES TRANSFERRED TO THEM.
- MUCH MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE, THAT REQUIRES ACTIVE GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AS WELL AS PARTNERSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY.
- ANOTHER IMPORTANT ISSUE RELATES TO THE WEAK FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE PANCHAYATS.
- THE OTHER DAY HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER VAJPAYEE MET WITH THOUSANDS OF LOCALLY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES IN DELHI.
- WHILE ASSURING THEM THAT GRASSROOT DEMOCRACY IS HERE TO STAY, HE LAMENTED THE EXTREMELY LIMITING FINANCIAL POSITION OF PANCHAYATS.
- AT THE VILLAGE LEVEL, HE SAID, A PANCHAYAT ON AN AVERAGE RECEIVES 30,000 RUPEES ANNUALLY.
- WHAT WAS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT ABOUT THAT EVENT WAS THE STRONG POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO DECENTRALISATION.
- THE LARGE TURN OUT OF WOMEN FURTHER REINFORCES OUR FAITH IN THEM AS ENERGETIC AGENTS OF CHANGE.
- I'M SURE THE WORKSHOP DELIBERATIONS HAVE ASSISTED IN PAVING THE WAY FOR WIDER DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH, AND GENERATING NEW IDEAS FOR PROMOTING AND STRENGTHENING DECENTRALISATION.
- WE LOOK FORWARD TO AN ONGOING DIALOGUE WITH ACADEMIA AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS ALIKE, TO HELP TAKE THE DECENTRALISATION AGENDA FORWARD.
- THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH!