

For immediate release

There is no vaccine for climate change - UNEP Head Inger Andersen at CEEW's 10th anniversary

New Delhi, 13 August 2020: “There is no vaccine for climate change. We must embed sustainability into COVID-19 recovery,” **Ms Inger Andersen**, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme said while speaking at a high-level session organised by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), today.

Ms Andersen also stated that the economy cannot be revived at the cost of the environment. “We all know we have to change, but now with COVID-19 and the rise in poverty, we have no more time. Once ecosystems collapse, there is no coming back.” she said.

The discussion on shifting sustainability from the margin to the mainstream was the first in a series of high-level sessions being organised by CEEW as part of its 10th anniversary celebrations. The session also included **Mr Jamshyd N. Godrej**, Chairman, Godrej & Boyce and Chairperson, CEEW; **Ms Bahar Dutt**, Environment Journalist and Associate Professor, Shiv Nadar University; **Ms Miniya Chatterji**, CEO, Sustain Labs Paris and Founding Director, Anant Fellowship for Climate Action; **Ms Archana Soreng**, Member, UN Secretary General’s Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change; and **Ms Kanika Chawla**, Director, CEEW Centre for Energy Finance.

Ms Inger Andersen said, “As we move towards the delayed COP26 UN Conference on Climate Change, we are calling for all countries, including India, to take earnest efforts to make real the promise of Paris and to also stretch their commitments in the new Nationally Determined Contributions. Humanity’s best bet is to minimise the risks and impacts of crises such as COVID-19 by putting sustainability at the heart of COVID-19 recovery.”

She further added, “We have seen sustainability move closer to economic decision making and while we have made many promises, legislatures and commitments, action is missing. We are facing a triple planetary crisis — first, the loss of nature, which is also one of the main drivers of COVID-19. Human expansion, illegal species trade and exploitation are bringing us closer to the animal world. Second, climate change — heatwaves in the Arctic, forest fires, devastating droughts, floods, locust swarms and cyclones are unfortunately only the beginning unless we take action. Third, pollution, which has led to millions of premature deaths, disability and diseases amongst the poor, who are often those living closest to sources of dirty air, power plants, waste dumps and so on.”

During his special address, Mr Jamshyd N. Godrej, Chairperson, CEEW, said, “CEEW has been instrumental in building trust among governments while contributing deep analytical insights that have aimed towards plotting low-carbon pathways to inform India’s mid-century strategy, driving low-carbon industrialisation through its pioneering work on green hydrogen, creating a democratic demand for clean air, assessing climate risks, and championing the energy transition. The common thread across our diverse areas of work has been our emphasis on squaring the trinity of jobs, growth and sustainability. Achieving this trinity needs reorienting the economic structure from being exclusionary to making sustainable development much more people-centric and inclusive.”

Speaking at the panel discussion, Archana Soreng, Member, UN Secretary General’s Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change, said, “For shifting Sustainability from the Margin to the Mainstream, it is important to promote the process of dialogue between the two stakeholders - those at the 'Margins' and those in the 'Mainstream', enable dissemination of knowledge and experience, and develop a common strategy that would perpetuate sustainability.”

Miniya Chatterji, CEO of Sustain Labs Paris, said, “11-18 million children in India are homeless. They need shelter, food and care so that they can become champions for the environment. Empty stomachs cannot save the planet. We need to incentivise social good and environmental sustainability for the private sector. We cannot depend only on CSR since turnovers are declining.”

In the past decade, CEEW has engaged in over 270 research projects; published over 200 peer-reviewed books, reports and papers; advised governments around the world nearly 700 times, and organised over 350 seminars and conferences. The Council has a footprint across 21 Indian states. CEEW has been ranked South Asia’s top think tank in its category, and 15th globally, for the seventh year in a row by the University of Pennsylvania’s Global Go To Think Tank Index. The organisation was recently certified as a Great Place to Work.

About CEEW

The Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) is one of South Asia’s leading not-for-profit policy research institutions. The Council uses data, integrated analysis, and strategic outreach to explain – and change – the use, reuse, and misuse of resources. It prides itself on the independence of its high-quality research, develops partnerships with public and private institutions, and engages with the wider public. In 2020, CEEW once again featured extensively across nine categories in the 2019 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report. The Council has also been consistently ranked among the world’s top climate change think tanks.

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