



Is Green the New Growth Paradigm?

An India-EU High Level Webinar on sharing ideas on green recovery post COVID-19

October 12, 2020 | 1500 to 1600 Hrs (IST) | 1130-1230 Hrs (CET)

With



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In collaboration with



On behalf of:



Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Nature Conservation,
Building and Nuclear Safety

of the Federal Republic of Germany

Proceedings of the Webinar “Is Green the new Growth Paradigm?”

An India-EU High Level Webinar on Sharing Ideas on Green Recovery Post COVID-19”

INTRODUCTION

On 12 October 2020 a webinar was organised with the title “Is Green the new Growth Paradigm? An India-EU High Level Webinar on Sharing Ideas on Green Recovery Post COVID-19”, with the support of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India, and in cooperation with The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ).

COVID19 has affected severely our health, lives, economies and the environment. While the challenges are far reaching, the post COVID scenario also offers the opportunity to re-shape our economic models in a more sustainable fashion, to build back better, for a green, digital and resilient future. The “greening” of the recovery strategies can offer the opportunity to build an integrated and systemic approach, with actions aimed at tackling the climate crisis, ensuring biodiversity conservation and working for sustainable development.

In the webinar the impact of the pandemic, the recovery packages in the EU and India and the need for green recovery were discussed. The webinar provided an opportunity for the sharing of such experiences and ideas from Europe and India on green recovery related issues.

DETAILED INTERVENTIONS

Mr Ugo Astuto, EU Ambassador to India (welcoming remarks): Behind this health crisis, there’s a looming challenge posed by climate change and environmental degradation. Though the context in the EU and India are different, there are important similarities and common challenges. At the EU-India summit in July 2020, a [Joint Statement](#), a [Common Roadmap to 2025](#) and a [Joint Declaration on Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy](#) was adopted to guide joint actions.

The cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) is of utmost importance, as climate change, biodiversity and circular economy are top priorities for the EU in the EU-India cooperation. In these challenging times it is very valuable that the EU and India can sit together and exchange ideas on how to build back better and emerge stronger out of the current situation. The EU and India are strategic partners that will scale up cooperation for a green, digital and resilient future.

Mr. Rameshwar Prasad Gupta, Secretary, Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC): With the strict national lockdown and other measures, India has been able to constrain the spread of the virus to a great extent. The decline in economic activities however led to a huge impact on the livelihood of the people. The industry sector in India has experienced significant economic loss due to [COVID-19](#), particularly sectors such as real estate, auto, cement, iron and steel and most Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Informal sector workers have been adversely impacted as well.

The Government of India is committed to adopting low carbon, resilient and regenerative green economy strategies in the recovery phase. The US\$ 266 Billion financial package under [Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Mission](#) announced by the honourable Prime Minister focuses on building self-reliance. This special [economic and comprehensive financial package](#) is equivalent to 10% of India’s GDP. The Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Mission has five pillars: Economy, Infrastructure, System,

Vibrant Demography and Demand. In the recovery phase India is aiming for a quantum jump in economy growth and in development of the infrastructure, while safeguarding the environment.

The Government of India implemented various relief measures during these hardship days, for the farmers, the informal sector and the industry. Tax filing dates have been extended and various assistance packages for MSMEs have been announced. A new Public Sector Undertakings (PSU) policy and higher Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limits in many sectors have been introduced. 420 million people have received direct financial assistance under the [Pradhan Mantri Gharib Kalyan Yojana](#) and partial credit guarantee schemes for Non-Banking Financial Company's have been announced. Borrowing limits for state governments have been raised from 3% to 5% to ensure adequate cash flow in the economy.

The Government of India has taken significant steps to address the challenges arising due to climate, including the [National Action Plan on Climate Change \(NAPCC\)](#) along with its eight missions and the [State Action Plans on Climate Change at the state level](#). India is exploring sustainable development pathways through circular economy, electric mobility and sustainable transport systems. India aims to achieve 175 GW renewables by 2022 and has further enhanced its target of renewables to 450 GW by 2030. India has reduced the emission intensity of GDP by 25% between 2005 and 2020. India is one of the few countries that increased the forest area due to the [Green India Mission \(GIM\)](#). The Government of India allocated additional Rs 6000 crore (EUR 649 Million) to the [Compulsory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority \(CAMPA\)](#) fund. It aims to promote afforestation programs in urban areas, artificial regeneration, wildlife protection and forest conservation. It will also generate employment opportunities in rural and tribal communities.

India's Nationally Determined Contributions are compatible with the Paris Agreement targets. To achieve these ambitious goals India is trying to mobilise its domestic resources through various schemes as well as a through a dedicated [National Adaptation Fund on Climate Change](#).

India has been pro-actively contributing to multi-lateral collaborations through global initiatives like the [International Solar Alliance](#) (ISA) to promote the use of solar energy and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. 88 countries have already become part of this international alliance. At the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019, organized by the UN Secretary-General, India announced the [Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure \(CDRI\)](#) initiative that focuses on promoting climate-friendly and resilient infrastructure. The governments of India and Sweden, with support from the World Economic Forum (WEF) launched the [Leadership Group for Industry Transition \(LeadIT\)](#) at the UN Secretary General's Climate Action Summit in September 2019. At present, 13 countries and 15 companies have joined this leadership group. India invites EU member states to join these global collaborations.

India has been implementing several initiatives for addressing climate change while keeping its development needs in mind. Equity between nations and generations should be given high priority in climate change related issues. International cooperation must play a critical role in ensuring 'equity' in the green recovery as well.

Ms. Clara de la Torre, Deputy Director General of DG Climate Action, European Commission: Green recovery should be at the top of the global agenda. There is considerable potential for the India and the EU to work together. Being the two largest democracies in the world it is important that both democracies work together to achieve their common goals.

While we are fighting COVID19, we know that climate change, the biodiversity crisis and environmental degradation continue to be existential threats. While we will find a vaccine for COVID-19, there is no vaccine for climate change.

EU experience has demonstrated that decoupling emissions from growth is possible. The EU is committed to investing in clean and digital technologies that will provide us growth and jobs as well as the first-mover advantage. We should not invest in the 20th century economy. 37% of the EU recovery package will be specifically used for green recovery and the rest must be compliant with the Paris Agreement. We need to rebuild a future with restored biodiversity, less pollution and less use of resources. This transformation cannot leave anyone behind.

While it is not too late to act on climate change, we have little time ahead of us for prompt actions. The European Commission has proposed to [increase the climate target](#) for 2030 to at least 55% below 1990 levels by 2030. This is a substantial increase of ambition compared to the existing target of at least 40%.

The green recovery also means embracing climate change adaptation and resilience as key drivers for a more sustainable environment and economy. Accelerated and expanded adaptation and disaster risk reduction brings positive economic, social and environmental benefits, reduces risk, increases productivity and drives innovation, while avoiding environmental losses and public expenditures. The EU is therefore keen on close cooperation with the International Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, launched by the Government of India.

The clean energy transition is a very critical element of green recovery. As also agreed at the EU-India Summit, the EU is very keen on strengthening the EU-India cooperation within the ISA. The active cooperation in this area is very much appreciated. We need to decarbonise the energy sector and enhancing energy efficiency in buildings is a crucial component of it.

The EU and India are cooperating in many sectoral areas relevant for green recovery, including the Clean Energy and Climate Partnership, the Water Partnership, the Smart and Sustainability Partnership and the Resource Efficiency Initiative.

The EU is grateful for the active cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change under the 'Strategic Partnerships for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement' (SPIPA). Ms de la Torre is also actively involved in the conceptualisation of [Adaptation Futures Conference](#) being co-organized with TERI.

A Research and Innovation call focusing on the Green Deal has been initiated by the EU, which will further steer the necessary actions towards a carbon-neutral economy. The EU is not going back to business as usual. The economy will be restructured and the creation of sustainable and green jobs for our future generations will be a crucial part of it.

Leaving no one behind should be the guiding principle of the green recovery. Women are the most affected during this pandemic and we should ensure that recovery action plans are gender-sensitive.

Dr. Ajay Mathur, Director General, [The Energy and Resources Institutes \(TERI\)](#): Civil society needs to be put central in the green recovery action plans. Fiscal transfers are provided to those who need cash particularly in agriculture and for MSME there is collateral-free credit for investments. The availability of green equity is important as it will mobilise other investments, especially in agriculture and MSME sectors.

Decarbonisation is already underway across the Indian economy and this is likely to further increase. Recent tenders for round-the-clock renewable energy for the next two years show how the costs of renewable energy are now comparable in price to coal-based electricity. A green transition is achievable.

Increased resilience is particularly important in the context of this global pandemic. Scaling up biodiversity conservation, minimizing human-wildlife conflicts and promoting urban forestry have a crucial role in building the resilience of the communities. While many Indian states are already doing this, there is a need to further scale-up the development of dedicated wildlife/biodiversity corridors to ensure better such biodiversity conservation.

There is also a need for providing thermal comfort to all, as part of increasing resilience. Here, the India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP) provides a framework for how to provide more efficient cooling, enhancing refrigerants used so as to lower the global warming potential from cooling and also for building more efficient buildings.

International co-operation is essential for the transfer of knowledge and enhancing the actions that we must carry out. We look forward to all countries for moving toward carbon emission trajectories which bring us closer to the 2°C and possibly 1.5°C compatible targets.

In these COVID-times, it is essential that actions can be readily taken. Together with 24 industries, TERI has developed a call to action for a set of organisations that commit to moving toward very specific goals along [8 priority areas](#) to not only address the pandemic today but also lead up to a green future tomorrow¹. That statement will encourage businesses, civil society and government to accelerate action. By cooperating and coming together we can achieve the green future that all envisage and all recognise the need for.

Ms. Laurence Tubiana, CEO, [European Climate Foundation](#): The decisions being taken today on recovery from the pandemic are decisions that will define our future. While we have clear short-term concerns, the amount of resources we are putting on the table to get out of this crisis is really defining our mid- and long-term future. Therefore, these joint discussions are very important, as it is not just one country or one region that is concerned, it is a global problem.

There is an immense potential for the cooperation between India and the EU in the area of climate change, low carbon development and development as such. It would be good to have an in depth discussion on India's concerns and needs on economic and social development and to see what elements from the inclusive green economic development model already happening in the EU would be relevant for the Indian context. The next India EU Summit could put forward such a discussion.

We should discuss how our lifestyles will have impacts on economic development and climate.

EU is in a good position to talk to others about what we are doing at home. Green diplomacy and international relations are much more about what you do at home than classical intergovernmental relations.

In the run up to the Paris Agreement India played a crucial role. Since then India has demonstrated how economic development can be decoupled from emissions. In particular the exponential growth of solar energy in India needs to be mentioned.

¹ <https://www.teriin.org/ceos-future-business-action-green-recovery>

Our willingness to indeed act in the face of climate change is our vaccine for the climate crisis. Understanding the problem and reacting in a rational way to the pandemic is setting an example for reacting to the challenge of climate change.

During the pandemic there is a much more positive attitude towards the EU within the member states as people realize the need for being together. This can be projected at the global level as well.

There is a need for an economic model that is more resilient. The most exposed part of the society is always the small businesses and the informal sector. Therefore, there is a need for putting people at the centre with a focus on inclusion and social equality. The achievement of social equality is more important than just GDP numbers to measure growth. We must put people first. We must ensure that our economy is indeed more resilient towards future shocks and that the green future implies co-benefits for everyone.

The consultative process at various levels has been important for the policy process towards the green deal. Many citizens were involved, and the governments in the end decided that recovery must be a green recovery. The idea is to create a new social contract and a new relation with nature. Climate-smart investments are growing faster in the EU while coal and gas are the economies of the past. The financial sector is considering green technologies as the economies of the future. The discussion started with the decision for net-zero by 2050 and then it led to discussions on how we build our future and what decisions we need to take now. It is not only an effort led by policymakers. Businesses are adopting net zero targets by 2050, which is a shared objective.

During the pandemic the discussion on mobility has been strongly linked to the discussion on air pollution. Cleaner transport has become more important for citizens, in order to have cleaner air.

For the EU to be able to focus on climate in the multi-year recovery package an agreed taxonomy is being developed of what should be funded. The European Investment Bank is the central actor for investing in climate change and is now being called the climate bank.

Ms. Vera Scholz, Director of Division Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure, GIZ Germany (closing remarks): Many years ago India started working on feed-in tariffs for renewable energy generation that now has led to the setting up of significant capacity. The strong partnerships between India and the EU mentioned in this webinar, including the Strategic Partnership for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement (SPIPA) project, co-operation on clean water mission, the Ganga rejuvenation project etc. highlight the significant potential for EU-India cooperation. When the pandemic started, at first the the people within GIZ were in a stage of shock, but the climate community came together within 6 weeks of the pandemic to discuss green recovery issues focusing on finding opportunities amidst the many challenges.

AGENDA

Time	Speaker
Welcome remarks	
15:00-15:05	Mr Ugo Astuto, Ambassador of the European Union to India
Keynote addresses	
15:05-15:15	Mr Rameshwar Prasad Gupta, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
15:15-15:25	Ms Clara de la Torre, Deputy Director General of DG Climate Action, European Commission
15:25-15:35	Dr Ajay Mathur, Director General, The Energy & Resources Institute (TERI)
15:35-15:45	Ms Laurence Tubiana, CEO, European Climate Foundation
15:45-15:55	<i>Questions and Answers</i>
Closing remarks	
15:55-16:00	Ms Vera Scholz, Director of Division Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure, GIZ Germany