

Outlook

74. Large scale industrialisation , spread of transport, communications and other modern infrastructure combined with the pressures of population growth have added to the difficulties of preserving clean environment and healthy natural resource base. These have been exerting pressures on the environment as witnessed in growing incidence of air and water pollution; and land degradation. Sustainable development is, therefore, a formidable task and calls for integration of environment aspects with development aspirations. Choice of policies and investment should be such as to harmonise economic growth with environmental conservation.

75. Environmental degradation imposes a cost on the society, burden of such costs being disproportionately higher on the poor, specially women who live and depend on fragile ecosystems. Such environmental costs need to be explicitly accounted for in economic planning and necessary remedial measures incorporated. The magnitude of these costs indicate the likely benefits from such investment in the environment sector.

76. The long term strategic planning in this sector needs to focus more on further integrating environmental considerations into development

policy making. This would necessitate, on the one hand, removal/dismantling of distortionary policies (*e.g.* general subsidies) that encourage overuse of natural resources and, on the other hand, emphasis on policies that help the poor and increase their access to services like drinking water, sanitation and health. A greater use of economic incentives (like prices and taxes) need to be adopted to harmonize the private and social interests towards protection of the environment. Open trade and investment policies that encourage technical innovations and transfer and a larger public participation in design and implementation of development programmes would go a long way in sensitising the development process to environmental concerns.

77. The environmental scene of the country today is of both concern and hope. The concern arises from the various environmental problems /issues which require immediate attention. The hope for environment arises from the fact that country is still one of the world's richest in terms of biological diversity and other natural resources. The hope for the future is also based on the many positive factors that are emerging - increasing number of peoples' movements focusing on environment, greater public and media concern for these issues and spread of environmental awareness among children and youth.