

भारत सरकार

राष्ट्रीय सलाहकार परिषद

नई दिल्ली

JAYANTI S. RAVI, IAS
Director



Internal

22nd June, 2006

Please find enclosed Minutes of the Meeting on ***Watershed Development and Wasteland Development Programmes***, held on Wednesday, 31st May, 2006 at Ministry of Rural Development, New Delhi, for your perusal.

Yours sincerely,

(Jayanti S. Ravi)

Encl: as above

Smt. Aruna Roy
Member, National Advisory Council,
278 (SFS) DDA Flats
Hauz Khas,
New Delhi.

- (a) **Extent of Wasteland :** The Wasteland Atlas of India 2000, brought out by the NRSA (National Remote Sensing Agency), had estimated the total extent of wastelands in the country at 63.85 million hectares, which stood reduced to about 55.27 million hectares, as per

Minutes of the Meeting on Watershed Development and Wasteland Development Programmes held on Wednesday, 31st May, 2006 in Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi.

PRESENT :-

- (i) Prof. C.H. Hanumantha Rao, Member, NAC
- (ii) Shri Jairam Ramesh, Member, NAC
- (iii) Dr. Madhav Chavan, Member, NAC
- (iv) Shri Arun Bhatnagar, Secretary, NAC
- (v) Dr. Renuka Viswanathan, Secretary, M/o Rural Development
- (vi) Shri Atul Chaturvedi, Addl. Secretary, M/o Rural Development
- (vii) Shri Rakesh Behari, Joint Secretary, D/o Land Resources
- (viii) Smt. Jayanti S. Ravi, Director, NAC
- (ix) Shri Harsh Mitter, DIGF (IWDP), D/o Land Resources
- (x) Shri Anoop Badhwa, DIGF (DPAP/DDP), D/o Land Resources
- (xi) Shri Pradeep Kumar Bhardwaj, Director, D/o Land Resources
- (xii) Smt. Archana Singh, AIGF, D/o Land Resources
- (xiii) Shri B.K. Trivedi, Desk Officer, NAC

Secretary (Rural Development) welcomed the Members of the National Advisory Council (NAC) and made a PowerPoint Presentation on Watershed Development and Wasteland Development Programmes. The following issues were highlighted :-

- (a) **Extent of Wasteland :** The Wasteland Atlas of India 2000, brought out by the NRSA (National Remote Sensing Agency), had estimated the total extent of wastelands in the country at 63.85 million hectares, which stood reduced to about 55.27 million hectares, as per the updated version of the Wasteland Atlas released in November, 2005, reflecting a decrease of about 8.58 million hectares over a period of 5 years (2000 – 2005).

(b) **Integrated Wasteland Development Programme (IWDP):** The treatable “non-forest wasteland” is about 30 million hectares of which about 8 million hectares are under treatment. The non-treated wasteland of 22 million hectares or so requires investment of nearly Rs. 14,000 crores in accordance with the present unit cost of treatment, whereas the current Annual Budget Provision is only around Rs. 500 crores.

(c) **Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) and Desert Development Programme (DDP) :** If the DPAP and the DDP are taken as largely applicable to arable lands, the treatment of the untreated 100 million hectares requires about Rs. 60,000 crores, while the current Annual Budget Provision is only of Rs. 600 crores. This, however, does not take into account the “degraded forest lands” overlapping with wastelands and the area covered under State level and Externally-aided Programmes.

(d) **Projected Investment :** The Parthasarathy Committee constituted by the Ministry of Rural Development has projected increased investment of around Rs. 1,50,000 crores in Watershed Programmes to cover 125 million hectares of degraded land in the rain-fed areas in the next 15 years, with half the investment coming from the NREGA and the other half through doubling the existing allocations for Area Development Programmes. The Committee also seeks to integrate various Watersheds under a proposed quasi-independent, professional Authority viz. “National Authority for Sustainable Development of Rain-fed Areas (NASDORA)” to provide policy and technical inputs and supervise and coordinate funding, execution and monitoring of the Programme.

(e) **Works under the NREGA :** Works under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) are to be focussed on drought-proofing, land and water conservation, water harvesting and the like.

(f) **Technical Committees for Watershed Development :** Under the Hariyali Guidelines, the Watershed Development Programmes are administered by the Zila Panchayat (ZP) at the district level and the Gram Panchayat (GP) at the village level. The ZP and GP have several other responsibilities and there is need to consider constituting District Watershed Development Agency (DWDA) – under ZP – at the district level and Village Watershed Committee (VWC) – under GP – at the village level. The DWDA and VWC would be technical bodies responsible for implementing the Watershed Development Programmes at their respective levels.

(g) **NGOs as PIA :** The Hariyali Guidelines provide for the appointment of NGOs as Project Implementing Agency (PIA) only if the PRIs are not adequately empowered and no suitable Line Department (like Agriculture, Forestry/Social Forestry, Soil Conservation) or an Agency of the State Government is available for appointment as PIA. Since reputed NGOs of proven competence and experience exist for the implementation of Watershed Development Programmes, the capabilities of such NGOs can be utilized for which the Hariyali Guidelines may require modification.

2. While note was taken of the decrease in the extent of wastelands in the country, it was felt that a Study may be commissioned to identify the causative factors leading to such decrease for scaling up and scaling out of

the identified success drivers. States like Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Meghalaya and Nagaland (where major decrease in the extent of wastelands has occurred) could be considered for this purpose.

3. Prof. Hanumantha Rao and Shri Jairam Ramesh referred to the progress made under the Area Development Programmes when it was indicated that the Blocks covered under the DPAP and the DDP in the Districts (where the NREGA is also operative) should be identified. It was suggested that the feasibility of integration of the funds available under the Area Development Programmes, the NREGA and the Externally-aided Projects ought to be explored; the Department of Land Resources could also examine the question of possible amalgamation of the DPAP, the DDP and the IWDP into one Area Development Programme to be implemented in Districts falling in rain shadow areas of the country.

4. When Shri Jairam Ramesh enquired about the steps being taken to act upon the Recommendations of the Parthasarathy Committee, Secretary (RD) said that the Report had been sent to the concerned Central Ministries and the State Governments and U.T. Administrations for requisite consultation; the Report is also on the website of the Department of Land Resources (dolr.nic.in) and is being examined in depth for early action.

5. The need for a National level Authority (like NASDORA) to integrate the different Watershed Programmes in Mission Mode (as outlined in the NCMP) was discussed. Such an Authority would be in a position to determine policy initiatives for the convergence of Watershed Programmes at the National, District and Village levels. Shri Jairam Ramesh and Prof. Hanumantha Rao stressed the importance of developing

suitable monitoring mechanisms to periodically assess the availability of ground water, with the NRSA's cooperation and involvement.

6. Shri Jairam Ramesh also expressed concern about the sustainability of projects after completion. Secretary (RD) said that sustainability could be ensured if the communities own the projects and the assets created thereunder. The community organizations have, therefore, to be actively involved and the issues of institution building addressed in the planning and execution stage of the projects (as recommended by the Parthasarthy Committee). Dr. Madhav Chavan pointed out that the constitution of Technical Committees at the District level and of Watershed Committees at the Village level could lead to problems in relation to the Zila and Village Panchayats.

7. To sum up, the status of the NAC's Recommendations in respect of Watershed Development Programmes, as of now, was only that the Parthasarthy Committee had been set up, subsequently, to, *inter alia*, examine the major issues, such as Re-identification of Blocks, Convergence, Equitable sharing of Assets and Peoples' Participation and to suggest ways and means to bring about better implementation. The Committee had submitted a Report in the end of March, 2006 and the Recommendations were now being processed further for early submission to the Minister of Rural Development.

8. In conclusion, Secretary (RD) thanked the Members, NAC (and the other participants) for the advice and suggestions offered during the discussions.