



F. Sherwood Rowland at the New Delhi Sustainable Development Summit.

Letting Science Touch Base with Decision Making

By RICH A VARMA

Scientists and researchers come together to discuss issues of sustainable development at an annual summit in New Delhi.

Get involved.” This is the message that F. Sherwood Rowland, a Nobel laureate in chemistry, urges for governments taking on the menacing reality of climate change.

“Rather than fanciful suggestions for mitigating global warming—from carbon sucking technologies to planting sulfuric acid in the atmosphere to serve as a shield from the sun’s ultraviolet rays and cool global temperatures—the issue will need a unity of purpose from all countries,” Rowland told delegates at a three-day summit in New Delhi on sustainable development and climate change. While global warming may already be visible in the early melting of Alaskan ice or polar caps and is probably not seen on the sunny beaches of California, it is not going to be limited to one region or continent alone.

The summit, organized in February by The Energy and Resources Institute, has become an important landmark for those committed to finding a globally acceptable and socially inclusive solution to the problem of climate change. The goal of

sustainable development is to allow Third World communities to improve their lives without destroying their own environment and future.

One of the natural processes of reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is photosynthesis, a beneficial activity of plants. However, people living near forests are tempted to chop them down and need ideas on how to earn their livelihood from them, instead.

Rowland, who is research professor of chemistry and earth system science at the University of California, Irvine, won the Nobel Prize in 1995 with Paul Crutzen and Mario Molina for work in atmospheric chemistry, particularly concerning the formation and decomposition of the ozone layer.

Rowland says the increase in carbon dioxide and a related increase in global temperature have been well documented over the last 200 years, with the rise being most pronounced during the last three decades. According to some scientists, even if the human race were to stop carbon emissions from the next second, the damage to the planet is now irreversible. “We have understood the dynamics of climate change. Now we just need some degree of an effort to find a solution,” says Rowland. “The time to act is now.”



Please share your views on this article. Write to editorspan@state.gov

For more information:

The Rowland-Blake Group at the University of California, Irvine

<http://www.physsci.uci.edu/~rowlandblake/>

Ozone depletion and Arctic warming

<http://www.giss.nasa.gov/research/news/20060314/>