

Remarks on Behalf of the Indo-US Science and Technology Forum

Dr Norman Neureiter

Thank you, Dr. Kasturirangan, for those charitable words. With about two hours' sleep last night and after a twenty-five hour plane ride, I hope I can still make it through these remarks. In any case, it is a great pleasure to be here. And Minister Sibal, I am deeply grateful that you were able to come and join this important seminar. And Professor Rao, Science Advisor to the Government of India and a great chemist in his own right, thank you so much for coming to Bangalore and starting off this particular session. Professor Mu, I also want to heartily welcome you and your outstanding Chinese delegation.

I am very much looking forward to this meeting. It is the first time we have had a truly trilateral event in the context of the Indo-US Science and Technology Forum. And I must say, bringing together scientific representatives of the two great nations of Asia along with the United States and talking about the direction of science and science policies in all three countries, I think, is a very significant development. The reason is simple. I am certain that how science and technology in these three countries develop over the next fifty years will define what the world will look like at the end of this century. So we are beginning something here. We are beginning a dialogue – or better said, a dialogue--that can have great significance and meaning for the future of Asia as well as the United States.

Now, there is already a lot of cooperation going on among all of our countries. But, permit me to say just a word about the Indo-US Science and Technology Forum. It was created in 2000 and the first formal meeting of the complete Governing Body was in March of 2001. At that time, I was serving as the Science and Technology Adviser to the U.S. Secretary of State and was picked to be the U.S. co-chair of the Forum. On the Indian side, the Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology has been from the beginning the Indian co-chair. First, it was Professor Ramamurthy for five years, and now Professor Ramasami, who unfortunately could not be with us today.

The uniqueness of this organization is that it was formally established as a private society under Indian law and it has a modest rupee endowment. That means the Forum has a small amount of money that we can use each year, largely here in India, to carry out our programs. The Forum's funds, professional activities and administration are managed on a day-to-day basis by our Executive Director Dr. Arabinda Mitra and his staff in Delhi. The basic purpose of the Forum is to catalyze cooperation – to bring together people whose interaction will result in enduring scientific and technical cooperation between the two countries. I hope that we can accelerate this cooperation through this meeting and, as you suggested Professor Kasturirangan, perhaps we will see some trilateral relationships coming out of our talks. That would give them special significance. We do not have a lot of money. We cannot fund a lot of research. But we can act very quickly, very nimbly and, I think, very effectively in bringing people together to actually do something.

Now, there is also a bit of history in our cooperative developments with China, and I am going to tell you something today which is not very well known. If you go back to the time of the historic breakthrough of President Nixon with China in 1972, you will recall the secret trip of Henry Kissinger, and then the preparation for the President's visit. Well, at that time I was working for the President's Science Advisor in the White House Office of Science and Technology and one day Dr. Kissinger said to my boss, "On this trip to China, I want to offer the Chinese something concrete, something tangible, in addition to the important geopolitical repositioning that is the core of our meeting. I want to offer them something in the field of science and to show them that there can be some direct benefits to them and to their economy coming from this new relationship. So I want you to put together some specific proposals for scientific cooperation that I can offer to the Chinese when we have our meeting. Of course, you can't tell anybody. This all must be done in complete secrecy."

Dr. Edward David was the Science Advisor and he came to me and said, "Look Norman, you've got to put something together. And we must have it ready in about ten days." Well, I did find some people to work with both in our office and in our National Academy of Sciences and we put together 40 specific proposals which covered a wide variety of topics in non-sensitive areas of science and technology. Those proposals were taken to Beijing and, while there was no immediate response, several years later almost every one of the topics suggested was represented in the scientific cooperative programs that subsequently developed between China and the U.S. In fact, as of today the overall scope of the cooperative relationship in science and technology with China is one of the largest that the U.S. has in the world.

Although I had never been directly involved in bilateral scientific cooperation between the United States and India prior to my association with the Indo-US Forum, I do know that such cooperation dates from the 1960s and has flourished, with occasional ups and downs, since that time. A really significant development took place in the early 1960s when the Government of India decided to create five Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT's). The first of these was located at Kanpur. The Government of India invited the United States to assist in developing IIT/Kanpur into the first rate institution it very soon became. The United States responded by assembling a consortium of nine research universities headed by MIT which sent faculty advisors to Kanpur for several years. I should note that Prof. C.N.R. Rao, who is with us today, began to establish his credentials as a world renowned chemist while a member of the IIT/Kanpur faculty. And I must also tell you that the next Governing Body meeting of the Forum will take place on the IIT Kanpur campus in December of this year.

When one looks at all the development challenges that still exist in Asia, and particularly the soaring demands for energy, along with the impact on climate and all the other effects which derive from that, I just want to note again my deep conviction that trilateral cooperation among the three countries represented here today is immensely important for our global future. I am very pleased to be a part of this meeting and am looking forward to two very interesting days. I want to thank again our distinguished Indian hosts who

have made these excellent arrangements. I want to thank all of you again for coming. And I am expecting some very significant results. Thank you.

