Indo-US S&T Innovation Expo
19 July 2011 - New Delhi

Speech for Dr. Ashwani Kumar, Hon'ble Minister of State for Planning, Science & Technology and Earth Sciences

Distinguished Guests, Media Persons, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me immense pleasure to be here today at the Indo-US S& T Innovation Exposition being organized today as a part of the Indo-US Strategic dialogue. This Exposition and the presence here of Dr. Holdren is yet another milestone in the evolution of an all-encompassing strategic partnership between the two great democracies of the world. A comprehensive and purposive engagement in science, technology and innovation space is a major focus of this unique relationship.

New opportunities for India and USA to benefit from the complementarities of their innovation systems are fast emerging. One of the cardinal philosophies of the bilateral Indo-US cooperation is to nurture and foster a bi-directional entrepreneurial ecosystem by adopting some of the best practices and successful models based on the concepts of 'mind to market' or 'bench to bedside' framework.

I am delighted to affirm that the Indo-US S&T Forum has effectively brought together government agencies, corporate houses, industry associations along with academia both from India and USA on developing a program portfolio that identifies, nurtures and promotes the 'power of ideas' to its realization in the market space. The DST-Intel Techno Entrepreneurship Program; DBT supported Stanford-India Biodesign Program; and DST-Lockheed Martin India Innovation Growth Program, were launched in tandem through active partnership. As an outcome, these programs have led to the identification of potential Indian entrepreneurs and the rapid commercialization of their technologies that are relevant to both countries through a value addition provided through active US-India linkages.

Since its inception in March 2007 the India Innovation Growth Program has led to the synergy of more than 100 business transactions between India and USA with an estimated economic value of over Rs. 350 crores (US$ 77 million). Similarly, the Stanford India Biodesign program has resulted into 20 patents being filed and several proto-types of affordable bio-medical devises and technologies developed which are at various pre-commercialization stages.

Innovation as a catalyst for inclusive growth is a non-negotiable imperative. To spur the Indian innovation eco-system the Prime Minister has set up a National Innovation Council (NIC) with the mandate to formulate a Roadmap for Innovations for 2010-2020 with a focus on equitable growth. The Council has undertaken several initiatives towards this end: it is facilitating the setting up of 40 industry and university

innovation clusters across the country to seed innovations; it is working on creating a $ 1 Billion Inclusive Innovation Fund on a PPP model to drive and catalyse the creation of an ecosystem of enterprise.

We recognize that a country specific model for promotion of innovation is required. We have a large population living in poverty with huge disparities in terms of access to development initiatives. It is thus critical that innovative approaches focus on providing sustainable, quality solutions for urgent challenges such as health, education, water, agriculture, livelihood and energy. This will require sparking the latent innovative capacity in the system and a development agenda based on inclusion. At the same time, there is a need to re-discover and re-trigger an innovation culture in the country to respond to our unique developmental needs and challenges. Government have taken several initiatives to foster the culture of innovation. These include the NMITLI (New Millennium India Technology Leadership Initiative), TePP (Techno-Entrepreneurs Promotion Programme), The National Innovation Foundation, TDB (Technology Development Board), HGT (Home Grown Technology Programme), TDDP (Technology Development and Demonstration Programme), GIAN (the Grassroots Innovation Augmentation Network) and SBIRI (the Small Business Innovation Research Initiative) etc.

In keeping with the agenda of the 12th Five Year Plan which emphasizes on faster, more inclusive and sustainable growth, it is vital to strengthen the Indian innovation eco-system to benefit people across the spectrum and improve their quality of life. The relevance of this eco-system to our future has to be ensured by leveraging international cooperation in the service of our innovation strategies. Global Innovation and Technology Alliances with strategic partners should form an integrated approach. For this, India needs new structures and mechanisms to create an innovation system which enables indigenous methods for affordable innovations and benchmarking of global best practices for quality innovations.

I am glad that we have already taken concrete steps for working with the United States - a global leader in science and technology. A series of initiatives including the Indo-US Bi-national S&T Commission, Indo-US S&T Endowment Fund, Indo-US High Technology Cooperation Group, the DST - NSF Programme of Cooperation for Scientists and Engineers, Indo-US S&T Forum, Indo-US Joint Clean Energy Research and Development Centre, confirm the expanse and uniqueness of the scientific and technological cooperation between our two countries. We hope that we would be able to significantly enhance the financial outlays under the Indo-US Bi-national S& T Commission to over US $ 100 million from the current outlay of US $ 50 million over a five year period.

I and Dr. Holdren have identified some of the frontline areas for focused collaborative research. These include development of green technologies and collaborative research in addressing the challenges of climate change, monsoon and cyclone forecasting and analysis, weather forecasting and crop management, Wheat

Genome Sequencing; Human Genetic-Genome Analysis; Stem Cell Research; Nano Biotechnology; Plant breading Technologies and Food Security; Micro-electronics and Material Science and Technology, Nano Science and Technology and Supercomputing.

U.S. high-technology firms increasingly find it attractive to conduct advanced research and development in India. Out of Fortune 500 companies, over 200 companies have set up R & D base in India. In this situation, it is obvious that India and US collectively enjoy enormous potential for the creation of wealth through innovation and entrepreneurship as partners in the 21st century knowledge economy.

It is heartening to see today that so many of you are working towards making a difference to the lives of our people by leveraging your creative ideas by converting scientific knowledge into technology, wealth and improved standards of living. I believe that the larger objective of the cooperation between the two countries should be to ensure for all our people better standards of life in larger freedom. I also believe that those who believe in common values of human freedom, dignity, democracy, justice and the rule of law, must stand together, work together and triumph together in meeting the various challenges that we fare in common. I am reminded of the advise of president Eisenhower who more than half a century ago, on his visit to India said, and I quote:

"We who are free-and who prize our freedom above all other gifts of God and nature must know each other better, trust each other more and support each other well".

Dr. Holdren, we Indians are indeed inspired by our past and we behold our future as a nation that will make a difference to the world. In the realization of this aspiration we seek to work closely with the American people who have drawn their inspiration from Henry David Thoreau and Martin Luther King - to name only a few of its illustrious sons. We are standing at the gates of a new epoch and we must move forward together in realizing our destinies.

Thank you