



Brief Report of the Webinar

Earth Day 2020

Wednesday, April 22, 2.00 pm IST

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day from Home

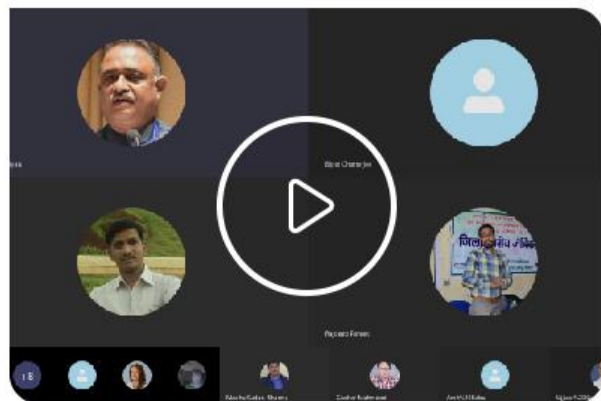
Theme: Climate Action

Background

Earth day is an annual event celebrated around the world on April 22 to demonstrate the support for environmental protection. This year it is the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day and this year's theme for Earth Day 2020 is 'Climate Action'. Around the world, its usual celebrations included activities such as the Great Global Cleanup, Citizen Science, Advocacy, Education, and art. Due to the coronavirus outbreak turned pandemic, many of the planned activities were moved online.

Webinar

Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) observed Earth Day by organising a webinar by using the virtual platform of Skype on April 22, 2020. Though 52 people registered for the Webinar, it was attended by 32 participants mainly representatives of civil society organisations across the country and CUTS staff from India, Lusaka, and Nairobi. The following were speakers.



1. Sara Nilsson, Programme Manager, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, Stockholm
2. Naomi Scott-Mearns, Sustainable Consumption Manager, Consumers International, London
3. Rashid S. Kaukab, Executive Director, CUTS International, Geneva
4. Clement Onyango, Director, CUTS International, Nairobi, Kenya

George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International moderated the Webinar.

Proceedings

The Webinar commenced with the opening remarks by **George Cheriyan**. He said this year is the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day and the theme for 2020, is climate action. The first Earth Day was held on April 22, 1970, to raise awareness about mankind’s role in protecting our natural world. On that day, about 20 million Americans, which was about 10 percent of the then population of the US, ventured outdoors and protested in favour of a more eco-conscious society. Many people were not even aware of some serious environmental issues, from air pollution to toxic dumps to pesticides to loss of wilderness. On-call from few activists, Earth Day started as more of a political movement, though today it has become a popular day for many communities to gather together and discuss environmental issues, clean up litter, plant trees, or simply reflect on the beauty of nature, etc. He further said in 2020 about 1 billion people are expected to observe the Earth day, mainly sitting at home.



Taking into consideration the enormous challenges, but also the vast opportunities, action on climate change has been chosen as the theme for the 50th anniversary. Climate action represents the biggest challenge to the future of humanity and the life-support systems that make our world habitable. He highlighted Goal-13 of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) which is Climate Action. He mentioned the targets of Goal 13, to be achieved by 2030 include: stepped up efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; improved education, awareness, human and institutional capacity for mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning; strengthen resilience and adaptive capability.

Then Cheriyan introduced the speakers and invited them to speak, one by one.



Sara Nilsson, Programme Manager, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, Stockholm: She focused on the key lessons learned in the context of Pandemic about Climate Change and how these experiences can be used to shape the future of the People and Plant. **She** started her speech by quoting the example of Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old environmental activist. Greta at age 15 started spending her school days outside the Swedish Parliament to call for stronger action on climate change by holding up a sign reading School strike for climate. Soon, other students engaged in similar protests in their communities.

Sara further spoke about Green Action Week and its theme Sharing Community for 2020. Green Action Week is a global campaign to promote sustainable consumption and the theme since 2018 has been 'Sharing Community'. She also drew the linkage between sustainable consumption and the sharing economy. She highlighted the key learning about climate change and experiences shaping the future of humankind and the planet during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Naomi Scott-Mearns, Sustainable Consumption Manager, Consumers International, London, and Co-lead of ONE PLANET NETWORK: She spoke about the linkage between climate action and sustainable consumption. She highlighted the Oslo Symposium in 1994 which proposed a working definition of sustainable consumption as “the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations”.



She further explained SDG-12 which is Sustainable Consumption and Production. Sustainable consumption is a systematic change which is delinked economic growth from environmental damages. She discussed international rules and regulations regarding sustainable consumption and highlighted some of the global practices to reduce carbon footprints. Reducing meat consumption and air travel, increasing uses of energy-efficient products are some of the examples which will be very effective in address climate change.



Rashid S. Kaukab, Executive Director, CUTS International, Geneva explained the role of trade and agreements about climate action. He highlighted CUTS Geneva intervention on agriculture, climate change in East African communities with help of CUTS Nairobi. He highlighted trade and trade agreements can be part of both problem and problem-solving. Trade is an efficient allocation of resources. The transfer of technology should be further enhanced.

He also emphasised the need for advocacy and research work on climate action for concrete action. There is a need among different stakeholders i.e. policymakers, civil society, think tanks to work on the harmonious and synergetic way.

Clement Onyango, Director, CUTS International, Nairobi explained Initiatives, challenges, and the need for budget allocation for climate action. He highlighted there is highest number of environmental laws and bodies in the history of earth which is not sufficient to deal with climate change. There is a need for holistic approach towards climate change and action. Civil society should unbundle and demystify the greenhouse gases and climate change. There should be a curriculum on sustainable consumption in primary and secondary education.



Conclusion

Cheriyen summarised the session and the open floor for discussion. In the discussion, various queries were raised which were suitably answered. Ujjwal Kumar, Bipul Chatterjee, and Madhu Sudan Sharma asked various relevant questions. While responding to one of the questions about policies on sustainable consumption and practices (SCP), Naomi replied that the United Nations (UN) member states already have a policy on SCP. India is one of them where recently policy is made for single-use plastic. Cheriyen summed up the discussions and concluded the webinar by thanking the speakers and the participants.

Many of the participants appreciated the Webinar and requested to organise more such webinars regularly.

Next Webinar: World Environment Day, June 06, 2020, on the theme: Biodiversity