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**Dr. Harsh Vardhan chairs Brainstorming session for Ministry of Earth Sciences to chart Strategies and Action Plans for the future**

**New Delhi, 19th September, 2016**

"Think with open minds, strategize and work in a coordinated manner for the betterment of every citizen's life", said Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, while presiding over a day-long brainstorming session for the Ministry of Earth Sciences held here today. The Minister expressed the need to revisit all the action plans focussing on the needs of the common man and reorient the Ministry's programmes in tune with the National mission.

"Pursue vigorously relevant plans for society's welfare and strengthen mechanisms to monitor and review their success", said Dr. Harsh Vardhan while addressing Senior Officers, Directors and Scientists from Institutes/Laboratories under the Ministry from all over the country. The Minister called upon various units of the Ministry to work proactively with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

The Minister laid stress on the role of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) in reducing the risk and devastation due to natural hazards in the country and in providing valuable services for socio-economic benefits. The brainstorming session was organized to discuss the on-going scientific programmes, gap areas, vision, future plans and road map for the Ministry. Issues relating to the weather forecast, climatology, seismology and oceanography were all discussed in great detail.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan highlighted that Government of India's integrated approach to deal with atmosphere, ocean and geosphere has paid good dividends and we have indeed started reaping them. The Minister emphasized on better planning and focused activities on exploring the ocean resources and polar-regions, which are strategically important.

Various new initiatives taken up by the Ministry as envisaged in the 2030 vision document were on the agenda of the daylong meeting. These include developing state-of-the-art multi-hazard early warning systems for natural disasters including Earth Quakes, Coastal Hazards, Tsunamis, high ocean waves, urban and flash floods; Weather and climate services for the northeast region; Marine Observations along Indian Coasts and a Coastal Mission; Support the Initiative of Blue Economy by improving ocean services and innovating and developing cutting edge ocean technology for the generation of clean energy from the oceans (waves, currents and thermal gradient) and map the living and non-living resources in the Indian Ocean and prepare the strategies for their sustainable use and harvest; Develop deep-sea mining technologies, including a manned submersible, for the exploration and mining of polymetallic nodules from the central Indian Ocean were also discussed. Further strategic investments and research for exploring the Arctic, Antarctic and Himalayas were the points of focus.

In addition, Dr. Harsh Vardhan also informed that MOES has initiated six new projects as a part of the implementation of the recommendations of the group of secretaries submitted to the Prime

Minister of India. These six projects have been selected by the NITI Ayog along with 42 other projects for all other Ministries of Government of India.

The Minister emphasized that the Ministry needs to identify new user groups and produce tailor made service products for sectors like Renewable Energy especially wind and solar energy, and Tourism. He stressed the need to improve the last mile connectivity to disseminate the forecasts and advisories to the users. Quoting an example, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said under the National Monsoon Mission around 19.4 million farmers are benefiting from agro meteorological information through sms and have contributed to around Rs. 50,000 crores annually to India's GDP. "We are working determinedly to take the present 19.4 million beneficiaries to 93 million by December 2018", The Minister added.

Envisioning the future prospects, the Minister said that at present, agro meteorological and fishermen advisories are given to only 30% of potential users and there is an urgent need to improve the communication strategy by forecasting for the block level under the National Monsoon Mission. Thus, more socio-economic benefits can be brought out by the Ministry.

Talking about stakeholder engagement, the Minister informed that on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September the Ministry is holding an all stakeholder meet with all the existing and potential partner agency representatives at INCOIS, Hyderabad. This meet is planned to work out a road map for expanding the outreach of agricultural and Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) advisories to 93 million farming household and 8-9 lakh active fishermen respectively.

Dr Harsh Vardhan concluded by saying "I am confident that the scientists of the earth science ministry will dedicate themselves making the Ministry as one of the best in the world in providing services for weather, climate, ocean, and seismology and bringing in more socio-economic benefits."

Dr. M. Rajeevan, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Dr. K.J. Ramesh, Director General of Meteorology, India Meteorological Department, Directors of Institutes/Laboratories, senior scientists and officers of the Ministry attended the session. Presentations were made to the Minister by the Secretary and Directors of Institutes on the details of on-going programmes, challenges and road map of actions for the Ministry.

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