

**Statement at the High-level Ministerial Segment of the Meeting of the COP4- PIC
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Madame Chair, Distinguished Ministers, and members of Party and Non-party delegations, Friends at the Secretariat, and Dear Industry and Civil-society observers,

Let me start with a small story – In the State of Kerala in India, where I come from there is a district called Kasaragod. Since 1976 upto 2001 – for 25 long years, Endosulfan was aerially sprayed in the Cashew Plantations and following discovery of serious illnesses among villagers and cattle by a local doctor, the community became aware of a terrible catastrophe that had befallen them. A long struggle followed till 2001 when aerial spraying was finally stopped, followed by a ban of the pesticide Endosulfan in the State since 2002.

Sruthi, a little girl in the village of Padre was born with stag-horn limbs. Her mother died of cancer and her father is a very ill agriculture worker. Since 2002, the community has taken care of her. She has undergone multiple surgeries and every year she has to undergo artificial limb modification. A bright student, Sruthi struggles everyday to go to a school in the hilly terrain. The Local government with the help of the State Government, the doctors, social workers and civil society has set up an Endosulfan Victims Relief and Remediation Cell to support victims like Sruthi, of which I am a member. Today the Cell has paid solatium amounting to Rs. 50,000 (US 1000 dollars) to 180 of the family of the dead and atleast 300 more have been identified to be victims. More are dying and the list is growing. Medical and Social Remediation is being provided to atleast 3000 villagers, many of them children.

Now Kerala State has learnt a lesson, like many communities that have learnt such lessons. The Industry that have to sell these poisons and the institutions that have to regulate them unfortunately do not have an agenda to take responsibility at the local level. But we have moved forward. Thousands of farmers have taken to Sustainable and poison-free farming. Kerala has drafted the Organic Farming Policy. We have not been using Endosulfan for the last 5 years. We want to move into solutions that are sustainable, cost effective and provide safe food, livelihoods and environment. We are working together towards this...

We have come a long way and there is still more to go. With this story from a remote little village from Kerala I wanted to tell you all how our actions,

decisions at international forums like this can have an impact at the ground. We often forget those billion people whom we represent.

In COP2 and COP3 where I was Observer, I realised that things were only beginning. Today at COP4 I realise or rather feel that things are sort of ending. While so many countries have taken strong measures to regulate or ban hazardous chemicals, we are seeing the Convention faltering as it gets stuck in the stakes of the industry and a few governments. Can we allow this to happen? Look at it like this

1. Look at the amount of resources spent to get to this Convention and look at what it means to millions of people being impacted by chemicals. When we were in the villages asking people whether we should demand compensation from the industry whose Endosulfan (use or misuse) caused this to them. Almost in one voice they all said “No ! We only want them to stop this and let us live in peace and good health for our children. Money is not our lives”. Now do you know what this Convention means to the communities across the world.

2. In the 1950's the DDT plant in Kerala, which also produces Endosulfan was a gift from the WHO, to help tackle the big menace of vectors. But have we not come a long way ? We were so glad to hear the WHO statement this morning. In Kerala where this plant is also located, the community has nothing around them that is not contaminated. They have started a campaign called “WHO Take Back your GIFT”. Things have changed. We do not want these chemicals any more. So many farmers, consumers, communities and countries have learnt to live without them.

So, dear members of the country delegations and friends from the Industry, let us remember that when we are not wanted, we either leave or we make ourselves wanted, by changing what we have to offer. This change is not about products, its about attitudes. The products and the actions follow.

I appeal to the parties to consider in all their seriousness the implications of their decision in blocking the convention's smooth implementation, of which much has already been discussed.

I appeal to the Ministers and the parties to give that hope of life to this Convention. Lets not go back as friends and villains, of the environment, health and the Convention. Let us go back as a sensible and concerned humanity. After all our lives, our children's lives and the environment we live in are obviously more important than trading these toxic substances.

Thank you.