

**Acceptance speech by Shri Kapil Sibal, Minister for Human
Resource Development, Government of India on being
inducted into the Honorary Senate of the Lindau Foundation**

(Lindau, 29th June 2009)

1. Honourable Nobel Laureates, His Excellency Jose Manuel Barroso, Her Excellency Minister Dr Annette Schavan, His Excellency Minister Dr Gang Wan, Countess Bettina Bernadotte, the students assembled here, including our Indian students and friends.

2. To have been conferred this honour was beyond my expectations. I am a historian by choice, a lawyer by profession, and a politician by accident. A scientist must not be confined by history, must move beyond the formal logic of the law and remain above politics. Given this, I might not have been the ideal candidate for this signal honour. A risky proposition, one might say. But, risk is at the heart of every scientific enterprise.

3. I believe science has provided a momentum to civilisations in their quest for knowledge. Indeed, the march of civilization has been on the shoulders of science. Science and scientists have begotten to man, especially the common man, much more than kings, politics or wars. Lindau provides the idyllic ambience for the confluence of the greatest minds of our times. Distinguished scientists gather here, charged with the passion for science in its quest for the truth. It is science and scientists that make me optimistic for a better world. Unlike the 20th century, which was characterized by mutual suspicion and distrust culminating in the two world wars followed by the cold war, I believe the 21st century

will be one of co-operation, collaboration and inclusiveness because the challenges we face are common, formidable and unprecedented. Solutions to these problems lie not in smart negotiations, stealthy strategies or stricter laws, but in science and technology pursued collaboratively. Scientists as global citizens must rise above narrow, divisive considerations. Before anything, therefore let me offer my humble salutations to each of you; all of you.

4. Science and technology is value neutral. It can be used for both good and bad. Thus far, we have used science and technology to loot planet earth. We have fouled our ecosystem and we are far from committed to make amends. If we do not act now, we may not be able to stem the tide to annihilation. Unbridled consumption, pervasive monetization, profligate profiteering are the order of the day. It is naïve to think that market prices reflect ecological truths. Scant regard to the ecosystem, indifference to loss of biodiversity and the fallacy that Man Made Capital (MMC) can entirely replace Natural Capital (NC) –strike at the root of sustainability. Ironically, scientific solutions and technological breakthroughs will help us emerge successful in our struggle for survival. Lindau, I hope will give birth to such solutions. The free spirit of scientific dialogue is seed to creativity. Science is not formal logic. It allows Icarus to fly without falling. The gifted young gathered here will find their mentors and thus charter the future course of scientific endeavours. Scientific enterprise is not only about discovering new facts, but it is also about discovering new ways of thinking about them. Lindau provides the ideal platform to do so.

5. A second and more important issue is that of equity. S & T has brought prosperity to the world, but it has not been uniform in its impact. The scourge of poverty persists. Our movement forward needs a course correction. I believe in the adage that “poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere”. In the 21st century we need to abate and not exacerbate existing disparities. We need to demolish existing boundaries through fresh scientific thinking and new technology interventions. The solutions however, must be both accessible and affordable.

6. Countess Bernadotte, you epitomize a most sublime legacy. For 50 years, the concept of bringing together Nobel Laureates with students and young scientists in a relaxed and informal atmosphere has achieved the objective of creating global networks of scientific cooperation, in line with your unflinching commitment. The German government must be lauded for supporting and encouraging the Lindau Foundation. My good friend Her Excellency Dr. Annette Schavan, is here to facilitate the Lindau exchanges. In Prof. Schurrer, the Lindau Foundation has at its helm a man whose zeal and enthusiasm represents what the foundation stands for.

I congratulate H E President Jose Manuel Barroso for his induction to the Senate.

I accept with humility my induction into the Senate. Thank you ladies and gentleman.