

The world may have nothing left to save tomorrow: Maneka Gandhi

Indian parliamentarian and environmental activist Maneka Gandhi has called for a world 'where we don't emit carbon at all'.

A former environment minister in India, Gandhi told the media before this year's Energy Globe Award presentation ceremony Monday that while the word environment had become the most fashionable term to be used by companies and advertising agencies, not much was being done by governments to reverse the trends which are fast-forwarding the planet to destruction.

'We are so close to the red line that we might wake up tomorrow and discover there is nothing to save,' stressed Gandhi, referring to the catastrophic changes being experienced due to climate change because of the carbon footprint we're leaving on the planet, EUNewsAsia reports.

Chairing this year's press meet in her capacity as chairwoman of the International Energy Globe Jury, she noted that the European Union has been fastest off the mark in dealing with carbon emissions. The Energy Globe awards are presented by the European Parliament.

'Emissions have increased in 2008 as compared with 2006, and in this regard, US and Asia are doing much worse,' she added.

Mikhail Gorbachev, president of the erstwhile Soviet Union, said: 'Wherever we look there are grounds for concern - the air, the oceans, the rivers, the forests, resources - everything is a problem. And no country can handle this problem alone. We need to pool our efforts, our resources.'

The question of promoting biofuel as an alternative to oil drew divided opinions among the panel. While Gandhi emphasised that biofuel had to be an option because of the skyrocketing oil prices, Gorbachev said biofuel had to be promoted in a way that the rainforests were not destroyed because 60 percent of the world's carbon emissions were being absorbed by the rainforests.

The subject of nuclear power again drew a wedge between the speakers. Gandhi said nuclear power was not an option for India. 'We cannot handle nuclear waste; nor can others who pretend they can,' she said.

Hans-Gert Poettering, President of the EP, speaking on behalf of the hosts of the function, said that the EP has made tackling climate change one of its highest priorities.

The Energy Globe Award was first presented in the year 2000. This year 15 nominees working on viable environmental projects, saving the planet from millions of tonnes of carbon emissions and other pollutants, were selected from 853 submissions under the categories Earth, Fire, Water, Air and Youth.

The awards were presented at a gala function with Indian actor and director, Aamir Khan, being one among many celebrities presenting the awards.

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