

## **4<sup>th</sup> Annual IACC Conference on CSR Sees In-depth Discussions on Two Current Issues – Importance of Teamwork and Role of Technology**

*Day long interaction between Corporates, NGOs and other Stakeholders considered fruitful by most participants*

**Mumbai, July 18, 2017:** The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual CSR Conference organized by the Indo-American Chambers of Commerce (IACC) held in The Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, Mumbai on July 10, 2017 turned the spotlight on two of the most important issues currently in focus with regard to social initiatives by corporates – the significance of collaboration & teamwork, and the role that technology can play in the process.

The Conference, attended by a cross section of representatives from industry, government, non-profit organizations in the social sector and social enterprises, researchers, educationists and others was based on the theme “Partners for Change: Leveraging Leadership, Teamwork and Technology for Effective CSR”.

Two key presentations at the Conference were the Inaugural Address by Chief Guest Shri Raje Ambrish Rao, Honorable Minister of State, Department of Tribal Development & Forest Development, Government of Maharashtra, and the Keynote Address delivered by Ms. Reema Nanavaty, Director, SEWA. A context setting introduction was presented by Ms Madhulika Gupta, Conference Chairperson. Other prominent speakers included Mr. Ranjit Shahani, Vice Chairman & MD, Novartis, Ms. Puja Marwaha, CEO, CRY, Mr. Sunil Mehta, CMD, SPM Capital Advisers Pvt Ltd, Mr. Abhishek Agarwal, Country Director, Accion India, Mr Nehal Sanghavi, USAID and others.

In his Welcome Speech, Mr Sunder Advani, CMD, Advani Hotels & Resorts (I) Ltd, and also President, IACC-WIC spoke about how concepts related to social involvement of corporates had moved from “cheque book philanthropy” to “strategic philanthropy” and now many companies had CSR teams or CSR specialists on Boards.

Speaking at the inauguration, Chief Guest Shri Raje Ambrish Rao said that there was “tremendous scope for the government, industry and social organizations to work together”, especially in “rural India where 70% of the population lives”. Programmes for tree plantation or to implement important government schemes like Swachh Bharat or construction of toilets in rural villages could be taken up. He urged all present “to work together to create a Maharashtra and an India that all can be proud of”.

Veteran social activist Reema Nanavaty stressed that efforts should be focused on “building community based enterprises” – collectives formed by the disadvantaged and underprivileged which would help them make economic gains. The stress should be on “developing self-reliance, and inculcating social values such as truth and non violence”. She

emphasized that the “poor do not want charity”, but need to be empowered so they can “earn adequately and live a life of dignity and self-respect”.

The Conference concluded with a fairly wide consensus that the corporate sector, government and social sector needed to work together, using various levels of tripartite collaboration to address the social needs of the underprivileged sections of society. While new technology, particularly the use of mobile based internet systems, have opened up many new avenues for identifying problems, creating delivery mechanisms and tracking and analyzing effectiveness of implementation, the methodology of assessment should consider not just immediate success, but also the less ‘measurable’ long term social impact.

A summary of the Panel Discussions:

### The Health Sector

The first panel focused attention on why India remained backward in terms of health and other social parameters despite economic growth. Partnerships with social organizations could focus on specific issues and to achieve scale and countrywide impact existing, and often underutilized government and public sector networks such as the Post office, Indian Railways, health workers (ASHA) could be involved.

### Collaboration and Team Spirit

The panel noted that industry and social organizations often had shared goals, but needed to develop common action programmes too. Increased interaction between the two sides has resulted in greater understanding, but there are still varied work styles and other gaps that need to be bridged.

### Leveraging Technology

Contemporary and emerging technologies have allowed new paradigms to be explored, and out of the box solutions applied to tackle existing social problems. Technology has improved the ability to implement projects on a far wider scale than was earlier possible and also enhanced the possibilities of tracking impact.

### Social Entrepreneurship

It was felt that not all social interventions could yield immediate economic dividends. Many non-profits were in fields that aimed to have longer term social impact, which could not be ‘measured’ in monetary terms. Levels of professionalism in the social sector have risen and so non-profits should not be embarrassed about claiming just rewards for what they added to the value chain.