

Opening remarks by Pradeep S. Mehta

1. Thirty years ago, during the 90s, a new paradigm emerged to fundamentally alter the power sector. It grew out of the wider “Washington Consensus” on development and was spearheaded by multilateral institutions.
2. The new paradigm came on the heels of the investment crisis and growing dissatisfaction with state-owned utilities. It basically comprised a package of four structural reforms:
 - a) Regulation through autonomous regulatory entities
 - b) Restructuring through unbundling of the state-owned utilities
 - c) Increased Private sector participation
 - d) Enhancing Competition in the power market.
3. Yet, after almost three decades, the Indian power sector is still plagued with

diverse issues ranging from payment delays by the already cash-strapped Discoms, bankruptcy of large generation utilities, regulatory and policy inconsistency, to lack of on-ground implementation.

- 4. In recent times, the COVID 19 pandemic and the nation-wide lockdown have also created a major setback for the already ailing power sector.**
- 5. Moreover, since the turn of the twenty-first century, the power sector has been overtaken by important policy shifts and momentous technological changes.**
- 6. In recent years, the world has embraced the Sustainable Development Goal on Energy (SDG7), which aims to achieve universal access to sustainable, affordable, and clean energy by 2030.**
- 7. We are also witnessing a swift global transition to low-carbon and renewable energy sources in line with the Paris**

Accord's commitment to fight climate change. Technological disruption is ushering new, decentralized actors into the sector and reshaping business models.

- 8. Hence, there is a growing consensus that the reform approaches based on the 1990s model alone will not be able to address the fiscal and operational challenges faced by the power sector. As the world is changing, it is only natural that the power sector reforms will need to support these changes.**
- 9. Power sector reforms must be shaped by the political and socio-economic context of individual states. There is no one size-fits-all framework; hence, the reforms should be tailored according to the local needs and challenges.**
- 10. Furthermore, from the Consumers perspective, they hardly have any choice as they primarily consume electricity through the grid. Therefore, the sector**

needs bold and strong business-conducive consumer-friendly reforms.

- 11. At the same time, consumers also need to understand and support or oppose such reforms in a judicious manner. However, to facilitate the same, they need a basic understanding of their rights and the institutional knowledge of the sector for taking up their issues.**
- 12. CUTS International has been working towards this end over the last three decades. Our efforts have been towards building capacities of electricity consumers in order to facilitate their participation in the regulatory process and also influence key policy decisions.**
- 13. We have also been extensively working in the areas of promoting green energy - rooftop solar, Electric Vehicles etc.**
- 14. It is imperative to mention here that these endeavours would not have been successful without the consistent**

support for organisations such as Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation, for which we are immensely grateful.

15. With this, I would like to call upon Mr. Anshu Bharadwaj, CEO of Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation to deliver his opening remarks.