**Youth Conference on Environment**

**GREEN GULF: THREATS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS**

Organized by

Gulf Research Center

and
TERI (The Energy and Resources Institute), New Delhi

In association with

American University of Sharjah

8 February 2006

Venue
Main Auditorium, American University of Sharjah

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you to this conference. I am thankful to all of you for being a part of this event, which also witnesses the launch of the executive summary of the Green Gulf Project - a joint research project of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), Dubai, and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi.

The release of the Green Gulf executive summary and this youth conference on environment coincide with the special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) currently taking place in Dubai.

The Arabian Gulf region is one of the world’s most naturally endowed and economically prosperous regions, but Gulf countries face several urgent environmental issues that include water scarcity, land degradation, biodiversity, coastal environment degradation and air pollution.

Seeking solutions to the environmental issues that are on the horizon is a top priority today. Environmentalists across the globe are urging governments, authorities and the public to change their attitudes, approaches and actions towards the earth’s finite natural resources and the environment.

There is an urgent need for us to identify, analyze and understand the environmental threats that the region is facing; there is an urgent need for us to seek solutions that will lead to sustainable development; and there is an urgent need for us to inform the international community that we are seeking and will continue to seek answers to these critical issues and to institute measures that will correct the mistakes of the past and pave the way for a greener region and a greener planet.

The governments in the region are definitely putting environmental issues to the top of their agendas, but it is our duty as a research institute to make sure these regional policies evolve further and make their mark in the international arena as well. The Green Gulf project is our humble attempt to lay the foundation for regional cooperation in this crucial area.

The driving force behind change in any sphere has to embrace every single section of society in order to influence thinking and action. It is, therefore, extremely essential that the youth of today understand, assimilate and seek answers to crucial environmental issues, which have affected their past and present and will drastically impact their future as well.

This Youth Conference on Environment intends to promote environmental awareness and motivate young minds in the Gulf region to start looking around them, become aware of the damage to their environment and natural resources, realize the intensity and urgency of the situation, probe deeply into the existing threats and causes and suggest innovative and immediate solutions.

The conference will witness presentations from 10 student speakers – who have been chosen by an international panel of experts based on the abstracts received from university students in the UAE.

This conference has a vital role to play in fulfilling a vision that the GRC and TERI share for the region – a vision of a ‘Green Gulf’ that we hope will translate from being a regional environmental effort to an international movement that aims to promote and instill environmental awareness in the hearts and minds of the younger generation.

The GRC has also commissioned an environment research program with a dedicated Web-portal that contains all the resources necessary for a sound understanding of the issues.

Wishing you a pleasant day, I thank you all for your participation in this conference.