

Acceptance of Citation – Ron Watts, November 7, 2007

4th International Conference on Federalism

Madame President,

I am deeply moved and highly honoured to receive this citation, and to receive it from you.

It has been a privilege to be involved in all four International Conference on Federalism, especially to take part with Bob Rae in the initiation of these conferences (and I thank Bob Rae for his generous remarks about that in the previous session), and also to work with Arnold Koller, Raoul Blindenbacher and George Anderson in developing these conferences. These conferences have pioneered the idea of focusing upon the experience of those involved in the practice of federalism and have developed structured processes to facilitate the meaningful exchange of experience among those from different federations in order for us to learn from each other.

It has been a particular privilege to work at this conference with Mr. Pande and his Inter-State Council team of colleagues and advisors. I congratulate him for raising this conference to new heights not envisaged when the first was contemplated nine years ago. And I also congratulate the political leaders and public officials who have participated in the plenary sessions and in the workshops and theme sessions, the academics who diligently prepared background papers, reviewed them at the pre-conference, and supported the workshops, the young professionals who ensured that we looked not just to past experience but to future challenges, the many staff who have looked after the logistics of the large number of delegates, and the individuals who were engaged in the cultural evenings and the public outreach program. They all contributed to the enormous success of this conference. A particular personal pleasure has been in getting to know Mr. Pande as a perceptive and wise friend.

Ever since I began my comparative study of federations nearly 50 years ago with a study that included India, I have been personally impressed by the rich and complex diversity cherished and valued within the unity of the Indian Union. Stretching from the snow-capped mountains in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south, and from the East and North East across to the West, the Union of India encompasses an enormous diversity. Indeed, it is clearly the quintessential federal society. Furthermore, observing the progress of India in the 60 years since independence, despite the problems identified by some of the Indian speakers at this conference and while like all federations it is still a work in progress, I am extremely impressed by what has been achieved in the evolution of India's own distinctive variant of federalism uniting diversity in what is now a fully mature democratic federation.

In closing, speaking both for myself and I am sure for all of us here from other federations, I wish to thank you, through you Madame President, India for the enriching and memorable experience provided by this conference.

Thank you; thank you very much.