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Summary of Recommendations

Capacity Development Workshop for Improving Agricultural Productivity, Water Use Efficiency and Rural Livelihoods

(An Intersessional Meeting for CSD-17)

Bangkok, Thailand

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat has the honour to transmit to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventeenth session the Summary of Recommendations of the Capacity Development Workshop for Improving Agricultural Productivity, Water Use Efficiency and Rural Livelihoods (see annex).

¹ E/CN.17/2009/1.

Annex

Summary of Recommendations **Capacity Development Workshop for Improving Agricultural Productivity, Water Use Efficiency and Rural Livelihoods (An Intersessional Meeting for CSD-17)**

1. We, the representatives of various Governments, international and academic institutions, and major groups participated in a Capacity Development Workshop for Improving Agricultural Productivity, Water Use Efficiency and Rural Livelihoods, organized jointly by UNDESA, UNW-DPC and UNESCAP in Bangkok from 28-30 January 2009 as an *intersessional event* for the 17th Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).
2. We consider this workshop to be an important step in advancing the implementation of key elements of the sustainable development agenda as articulated in the Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) and in formulating policy options and possible actions in order to overcome the obstacles and barriers identified in CSD-16.
3. In the workshop, we discussed issues and challenges concerning agricultural development and food security, agricultural water management, rural development, land use planning and management, and the need for adaptation to climate change. We shared experiences and lessons learned on the pros and cons of various policy options and practical measures which could contribute in addressing the challenges identified under each of the thematic areas being considered under the current CSD cycle, i.e. agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa.
4. The meeting recognized that achieving food security remains an important goal especially in developing countries. The food crisis endangers millions of the world's most vulnerable, and threatens to reverse the achievements made so far to achieve the MDGs and sustainable development. Policies and measures aimed at addressing the food security goal should address competition between food and energy crop production in a balanced manner. Recent food crisis have also demonstrated the need to develop safety net programs so that governments could react more quickly to rising food and input prices. Impact of these policies need to be monitored regularly to identify gaps and solutions.
5. We understand that the proceedings of the meeting will be compiled by the workshop organizers and shared with the participants in due course. Meantime, we would like to relay the following messages to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. The Major Groups have also provided inputs based on the discussions during this workshop, which will be reflected in the final report.
6. *Increase agricultural productivity:* Agricultural production systems are faced with a complex set of challenges, including climate change, desertification and drought, land and water availability, population growth, changing consumption patterns, market variability of

input factors and for agricultural products, and bio-energy demands. Improving agricultural productivity requires:

- a long-term vision developed with the participation of all stakeholders to alleviate food insecurity, accompanied by a plan of action consisting of short, medium and long-term measures to translate this vision into action;
- policy actions to enhance smallholder competitiveness and profitability including access to markets;
- policies that will encourage appropriate investments in agricultural research, irrigation, education, rural finance, insurance, information systems, roads and market infrastructure;
- effective linkages between research and extension services; and
- adoption of improved farming systems approaches
- Supporting local knowledge and practices.

7. Implementation of above policies need to be backed up by an appropriate enabling environment and strengthened institutional governance.

8. *Promote integrated management of land and water resources:* Efforts to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development not only require provision of safe drinking water and basic sanitation services but also require solutions to address the interlinked crises of land degradation, water scarcity and deteriorating water quality. These crises are made worse by increased fluctuations in climatic regimes. Achieving water security in relation to increased food production calls for changes in current water regimes both on the supply and demand sides. Efforts in this regard should be directed at bridging capacity gaps at all levels, investing in new infrastructure, modernizing existing water delivery systems, and adopting improved water management practices and appropriate technologies. Similarly, land use planning and management policies should target reversing land degradation trends and improving land productivity. Integrated management of land and water resources within hydrologic units is needed to help in balancing competing uses of land and water resources.

9. *Provide access to social capital:* In order to strengthen rural livelihoods, both farm and non-farm, broad based investments in rural areas are required that benefit entire communities, and not only those who are engaged in agricultural activities. There is a need to support investment for the poor and their organizations. In this regard, enhancing the capacities of the rural population, through access to, education, skills development and the use of information and communication technologies, is needed to sustain the impact of investments made in rural development programmes. Moreover, in the case of small producers, policies should target inducing a transition from subsistence farming to market by increasing the access to assets, particularly to land, entrepreneurial skills, and social capital. The partnership building including public private and community participation should be actively encouraged in the context of policy development.

10. *Secure access to tenure:* Secure access to land and other natural resources, especially to marginalized groups, is central to sustaining livelihoods, especially in rural areas. The formulation of national land policies must allow for participation of the full spectrum of land users, and necessary assistance should be provided to poor and vulnerable groups, especially women, to take part in such participatory and transparent processes. In developing and implementing land management policies, diversity of the tenure and food production systems should be duly recognized.

11. *Adapt to climate change:* Climate change poses a serious threat to the sustainability of agricultural production systems and rural livelihoods. Adaptation needs to be viewed as a part of the coping strategy for poor rural people. Although adaptation measures will vary enormously, efforts should be mainly targeted at reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening coping capacities of societies and institutions in relation to their respective socioeconomic conditions. Mitigating climate change through the sustainable management of land, forests and other natural resources should be encouraged by providing appropriate incentives to rural people. Efforts should be made to exploit the synergies between mitigation and adaptation measures, through NAPs and NAPAs among others. Development of adaptation and mitigation policies should be guided by country specific situations and requirements and be duly supported by appropriate funding for capacity development and technology transfer.

12. *Scale up successful practices:* Addressing sustainable development challenges in areas covered in this workshop require multidimensional efforts and strong political and civic resolve. Constraints and opportunities vary in each country and within different parts of a country. Challenges are well known and considerable knowledge and experience exist to address them. In this regard policies and actions should be targeted at scaling up and mainstreaming successful practices.

13. Finally, we thank UNDESA, UNW-DPC and UNESCAP for organizing this workshop, as well as other international institutions for their contributions to this workshop.

30 January 2009
Bangkok, Thailand.