

Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting
for the Seventeenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development
23 – 27 February 2009

Land

Statement
on behalf of the European Union
by

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New York, February 25, 2009

Madam Chairperson / Mr Chairman, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Czech Republic has the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

To meet our Johannesburg commitments on land we must address the following challenges:

➤ **Challenge 1: Foster sustainable use of natural resources and minimise land degradation**

- **Proper land use and management, equitable access to land, enforceable land rights and transparent land policy** are key to ensuring sustainable development. Land policy may affect economic growth, social development, gender equality and even peace and stability. It is therefore both a complex and a critical issue.
- To produce food and other agricultural commodities, adequate access to land and water, these being increasingly scarce resources, are required. The productivity of land and the efficient use of water resources may be sustainably enhanced through **good agricultural practices**. These may include organic farming, ploughing-in crop residues, zero or reduced tillage and diversification.

➤ **Challenge 2: Break the vicious cycle of soil degradation, climate change and food insecurity**

- In some places arable land, fragile range- and meadowlands are deteriorating at an alarming pace. This ultimately poses a threat to **food security**, especially at a time when growing global demand for food requires increased production.
- **Adequate soil and land management** may simultaneously help secure food supplies, improve water retention, combat desertification and mitigate climate change. To achieve this **soil use must be re-thought**. To optimise soil use sustainable agricultural production practices, including actions in support of higher soil carbon levels need to be encouraged. Natural resource management techniques and technologies to improve soil and water management should be introduced. Actions that favour climate mitigation and adaptation need to be incorporated into future policy-making.
- To this end, **integrated planning and management of land and other resources** is needed. Diverse issues such as soil protection, rural development, biodiversity, conservation, tourism, social and even educational needs must be taken into account.
- Furthermore, given the relationship between land and food security, the EU underlines the importance of the **2004 FAO Voluntary Guidelines**. These support the progressive realisation of **the right to adequate food** in the context of national food security. They promote the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

➤ **Challenge 3: Secure access to land**

- States should take measures to promote and protect security of land tenure, especially for women, poor and indigenous peoples and disadvantaged groups of society. Legislation should protect full and equal rights to land and other property, including the right to inherit. Where appropriate States should establish mechanisms consistent with human rights and the rule of law that advance land reform and enhance access to land.
- Access to land is a prerequisite for **access to other productive resources**. Conversely, unequal access to resources, weak tenure systems and concomitant resource competition may lead to tensions and increase the risk of conflict. Addressing resource tenure may thus help consolidate peace in post-conflict situations.

- In some countries, inadequate land tenure arrangements constrain investment, sustainable natural resource management and economic development. The EU promotes consensual land policy processes and supports collaboration between the state, civil society and stakeholders with the objective of pro-poor land governance. These principles are reflected in the 2004 "**EU Land Policy Guidelines**" that provide conceptual and methodological support to land policy development and land reform programmes. The EU is happy to share the **experience** it has gained in many EU candidate countries and new member states, where this issue has been successfully regulated and now serves as a good basis for further development.
- Tenure interventions, if or when undertaken, must take account of local conditions and be based on an understanding of **local practices and customary tenure systems**. What best serves the poor depends on the context. While the identification or allocation of individual land rights may be suitable in some cases, the registration of collective rights or rights to long-term land use may be more appropriate in others.
- Control over natural resources is a source of power. Establishing pro-poor tenure systems requires the consideration of power relations at all levels. In this context the principles of democratic governance must be applied. Access to the resource tenure system on the part of the poor and an effective land reform are key to avoid elite capture and to ensure **equitable benefit sharing**.
- Secure tenure promotes sustainable resources use; environmental degradation is often the result of inappropriate tenure systems. Land, water and other natural resources have many different users and overlapping uses. Distinct tenure arrangements apply to different resources and uses. Establishing appropriate management arrangements and **links between resources** (e.g. between land and water or between urban and rural land), requires coordination and cooperation among authorities. Similarly, this applies to countries sharing **trans-boundary resources**, such as rivers and wetlands.

➤ **Challenge 4: Sustainable Use of water**

- Access to water in sufficient quantity and quality is fundamental for life and health. States should thus seek to improve access to, and promote **efficient and sustainable use of, water resources**. Allocation among users must be efficient but also pay account to the satisfaction of basic human needs. There must be a balance between preserving or restoring ecosystems on the one hand and the needs of domestic, industrial, agricultural and forestry users on the other, including safeguarding drinking water quality.

Thank you for your attention.