



**PERMANENT MISSION OF
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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Statement by

H.E. Mrs. Gerda Verburg,

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of

the Kingdom of the Netherlands

and Chairperson of the 17th

Commission on Sustainable Development

**at the Opening of the
17th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development**

New York, 4 May 2009

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Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our world is facing multiple crises in the form of poverty, food crisis, economic recession, environmental degradation and climate change. These crises are severely threatening world's population in its existence.
So, this is the time to act!

'Swords into ploughshares, words into action' I said to you at the IPM in February.

During this 17th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, it is our collective responsibility to come up with innovative and practical solutions to overcome these crises. This will be critical to help the affected population in the developing world, especially the most vulnerable groups.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our task at CSD-17, building on outcomes of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting and CSD-16, is to decide on measures that will move forward the agenda of the Commission. Concrete measures will have an impact on the livelihoods of those most affected; and that will prove that we can 'fundamentally make a difference'.
Therefore, the role of this session of CSD is more important than ever.

During the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting, in February of this year, we identified a range of policy options and actions for overcoming those key constraints and obstacles impeding implementation.

The Chair's negotiation document is in my opinion a good basis for our discussions. The Bureau and the Secretariat received several proposals for changes afterwards. To be as transparent as possible we have brought together the different proposals of Member States in a background document.

Five key messages reflecting our common thoughts include: (1) **think** beyond the multiple crises, investing in institutions, like extension and markets, (2) **make** a homegrown green revolution reality by sharing knowledge and making new technology available in all countries, (3) **scale up** practices that have proven successful, (4) **increase** international support to sustainable agriculture and rural development and (5) **develop** a safe and sustainable food chains.

Looking forward to the next two weeks, I am motivated by all the challenges we face; in agriculture, rural development, drought, water, land and going beyond the food crisis.

My deepest hope and wish is that countries will make the sustainable agricultural and rural development agenda central to achieving sustainable development and reducing poverty. This CSD should aim at providing not only concrete and tangible solutions, but should even more focus on concrete deliverables.

Let me remind us about the key problems

We live in a world in which the average income per capita is higher than any time in the past. Enough food is being produced to feed everyone!

And yet nearly a billion people still live on less than \$ 1 dollar a day. Most of them depend on agriculture for their daily livelihoods. And more than 800 million people are suffering from hunger and malnutrition.

Worldwide our Governments made the commitment to reduce the number of people living in poverty by 50% in 2015.

The achievement of this first Millennium Development Goal is further away than ever.

Although the food crisis is not front-page news anymore, it is still there.

There are a number of challenges to fight the food crisis, such as less available farmland, droughts, growing demand for bio-fuels and changing consumption patterns.

But one overarching message is clear: we have neglected agriculture too much for too many years.

At the same time, we are confronted with ever-rising trends in energy consumption and climate change.

If fundamental climate change mitigation and adaptation goals are to be met, international climate change negotiations must include agriculture.

Let us not forget that reports show that we use far more of our natural resources than our planet can regenerate.

Some reports indicate even four times!

And, let us not forget the competing claims for water. Agriculture is the main user, about 70%, of our fresh water resources.

So, we all have to face these dilemmas, including the dilemma of competing claims on natural resources – land, water and biodiversity – for the production of food, feed and bio-fuels.

Against the backdrop of the energy crisis and the climate problems, the political and international focus seems to be mainly on bio-fuels.

How important bio-fuels may be, I feel they are only a limited part of the solution towards a more sustainable future.

We need to base our economies more on renewable sources, not only for the use of energy, but also for producing materials. This is what we call a bio-based economy.

In the future, with a growing world population, growing world consumption, growing use of water, growing carbon-emissions, we have to use our resources and residues as smart and as sustainable as we can.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

So I say again -- Swords into ploughshares, words into action!

With this UN motto, I will ask you as Member States, UN agencies and Major Groups to go beyond generalities during this 17th session of the CSD.

We have to come forward with concrete deliverables and practical solutions. Only then, we achieve Millennium Development Goal 1 and 7: to reduce by half the number of people living in poverty by 2015 and to ensure environmental sustainability.

Let us not underestimate the challenges we are facing.

Realizing a Sustainable Green Revolution requires revolution in ideas, revolution in technologies, revolution in policies, market access and financial means. It calls for new, creative and innovative thinking as how to combine best science with farmers' knowledge. It must be homegrown.

And more importantly, it calls for concrete deliverables and actions to be implemented.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my opinion, answers and solutions can be found along a five-track approach. They will be helpful in addressing the issues and challenges faced by agricultural development, water management and rural livelihoods.

First, increasing investments *in sustainable agriculture*, especially in Africa.

Main focus should be on capacity building, improving research, training and extension infrastructure.

Here we need a paradigm shift in a way that you can make use of the application of the latest scientific knowledge and experience. But, made available based on local conditions.

Second, *creating an enabling environment* with the main focus on engaging the private sector supported by favourable policy frameworks.

Governments should set conditions and frameworks for attracting private investments.

Third, *developing and promoting sustainable production chains* for integrating production, processing and marketing to us as consumers.

Fourth, *improving market access*, especially for developing countries. Not only developing local and regional markets, but also providing more market access for products from developing countries.

Fifth, ensuring *food security and emergency food aid* via enhanced safety nets programmes for the most vulnerable people. In addition, micro-credits are crucial in this respect.

Finally, I would like to focus on the role of *governance*. Governments can and should take a leading role in facilitating and promoting sustainable technological innovations.

For instance, through investing more in public-private partnerships.

Distinguished delegates,

Let me now turn to our work during the next two weeks.

This is the policy year of this cycle. This means we need to make policy decisions to advance the implementation of the agenda in front of us. For this purpose, based on our deliberations during the IPM I have come up with the Chair's negotiating text. This will serve as the basis for negotiations.

The negotiations should be guided only by one principle: that we are here to play our role in "making poverty history". So I urge you to approach negotiations with this spirit.

The only – let me repeat – the only choice available to us is to succeed.

It is not only sufficient to have an outcome that is owned by everyone, but we need one that can make the difference on the ground.

To make the CSD more effective and relevant the Bureau has introduced an innovative approach in the organization of work. This includes, for example, the organisation of three Ministerial Roundtables under a new format.

The dialogue in these roundtables will be interactive and I will urge the fellow Ministers to avoid reading formal written statements.

The three interactive Ministerial Roundtables will be organized on the following themes:

- Responding to Food Crisis through Sustainable Development,
- Realizing Green Revolution in Africa, and
- Integrated Management of Land and Water Resources for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development.

Other innovations include:

- A dialogue of Ministers with the major groups and the policy research community; and
- A dialogue of Ministers with the heads of UN agencies and Chairs of Governing Councils and Executive Boards of UN Organizations.

Outcomes of the discussion of the roundtables and the dialogues with other stakeholders will lead to a political vision to advance the agenda of sustainable agriculture and rural development. Let me clarify one point here. This vision will not be a negotiated document. There will be only one formal negotiated outcome of this session, and that is the text I referred to earlier.

Let me emphasize that, in the midst of multiple crises being faced today, we need to become even more determined to advance the implementation of sustainable development agenda. This requires us to bring the principles of sustainable development at the heart of our efforts. And we need to work strongly on translating commitments into concrete measures and actions.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

We have a daunting challenge ahead of us during these next two week. But, we also have an opportunity to make a real difference in expediting the implementation of sustainable development.

My contacts with Governments and delegations over the past year have convinced me that the members of the Commission are prepared to break with business-as-usual; they are prepared to focus on practical and achievable decisions; and they are prepared to make commitments.

I am looking forward to working with you all over the next two weeks to achieve these goals.

Only together, we can assure that our common aspirations for the implementation of a fundamentally changed agricultural policy and green economy can become a reality for the benefit of our children and grand children.

Swords into ploughshares, words into action!
Let's make it happen.

Thank you.