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Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة
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17th Session Commission for Sustainable Development General Comments on the Chairperson's Draft Negotiating Text

Statement by
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United Nations Headquarters

Chair of CSD 17, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you for your election as the Chair of this 17th Session. We would also like to congratulate your bureau for all the arrangements for a successful policy session.

We at UNEP believe that your draft Negotiating Text provides a strong foundation to address the diversity of challenges society faces today. These are being exacerbated by many sustainability crises, including financial and economic, climate change, water and environmental and ecosystem degradation in general. Biodiversity and ecosystem services, which ultimately determine the future sustainability of agricultural productivity, are eroding rapidly. Collectively, these and other global crises are severely impacting our ability to sustain prosperity in the world and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We note with satisfaction that many of these and other issues are reflected in the draft text. We would, however, like to highlight two issues we believe provide opportunities for not only tackling the challenges but also addressing current and emerging sustainability crises. These are: a Global Green New Deal; and sustainable agriculture.

UNEP has proposed a **Global Green New Deal** (GGND) whose focus is not only about a global economic recovery but also laying the foundation for a green global economy. The GGND focuses on interlinked issues such as economic growth, green jobs, resource and energy efficiency, climate change, and also those on which CSD17 is focusing: agriculture, land, drought, desertification, rural development and Africa. It places value on ecosystem services. In addressing the current financial and economic crisis, we should ensure that we have a sustainable economic model – one that does not continue to add to the two most significant risks society faces today: ecological scarcity and climate instability. The reform of perverse agricultural subsidies is a priority for viable and sustainable agricultural systems to emerge in the developing world and globally.



We believe that additional and adequate financial resources should be provided to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to support sectors that have the most significant potential for both poverty reduction and environmental improvement, such as ecologically sustainable agriculture, rural clean energy development, water conservation, disaster preparedness, and related skill and capacity building activities.

Madam Chair, we all know that the state of environment affects food production through, for example, its role in water, nutrients, soils, climate and weather. Ecosystem services enhance agro-ecosystem resilience and sustain agricultural productivity. Therefore, we should promote the healthy functioning of our ecosystems for agriculture to be sustainable to meet the growing demand for more food due to the growing human population.

It is critical to invest in ecological sustainable agriculture and freshwater systems by, for example, increasing investment in ecological infrastructure, reducing water losses from inefficient irrigation systems, improving food energy efficiency and reducing post harvest losses. Effective measures against the destruction of watersheds and natural water towers, such as forests in watersheds and wetlands, are equally important for the sustainability of agricultural production. UNEP has highlighted these issues in the rapid food response assessment, called "The Environmental food crisis."

The international community should devise a mechanism to compensate societies that preserve the global commons. We believe that the United Nations' new Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD) programme could become an important effort in this direction. We also believe that economic incentives such as equitable payments for ecosystem services offer opportunities for rural communities to have alternate sources of income during times of economic stress.

Thank you Madam Chair.