



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C.

UN Commission on Sustainable Development -17
Opening Plenary
May 4, 2009

Final

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Thank you Chair

On Earth Day this year, the new U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack was asked to characterize his vision for the Department of Agriculture, and he answered with one word – “sustainable.”

We should apply this same deceptively simple concept to our thinking about constructive outcomes from CSD-17. What are the best ways to shift our development patterns to sustainability? . . . in government and by all the major groups? What specific policies and programs offer the most promise?

Our work at CSD over the past two years has been a fruitful exploration of a vast array of related issues.

Our challenge over the next two weeks is to define pragmatic sustainable development solutions to the daunting list of global challenges – environmental degradation, food insecurity, climate change and the economic crisis. We need to consider new ideas, and at the same time be practical and realistic as we account for the real-world details of successful implementation.

The breadth and vast scope of the CSD-17 topics demand that we focus on the points of maximum leverage. We need to think carefully about how change actually happens. In our view, the path forward must include:

First, **expanded support for science, research and education** -- It is vital that we work together on strategies and programs that take advantage of scientific and technical know-how for sustainable agriculture, efficient irrigation, conservation practices for land management and many other issues.

Second, **empowerment of local communities to make decisions** -- We need to foster an enabling environment, and build capacity for solutions and entrepreneurship at the local level, with special attention to women, youth and local institutions.

And third, **creative use of communications technology to make information widely available** -- In this era of electronic communications, we need to increase two-way exchange of scientific information, weather prediction, user needs and solutions, market prices and economic conditions.

It is our hope and expectation that the ultimate outcomes of CSD-17 will move beyond broad generalities and rhetoric, to champion specific sustainability practices and policies that work. We should identify what works and promote it.

Throughout this CSD cycle, the U.S. has shared our experiences with what we have found to work. Examples include:

- Extension programs that link farmers and land managers with scientists and experts
- Innovative approaches to finance
- Collaborative research guided by user needs
- Connecting land management methods to the land's ecological capacity
- Rural development strategies such as member-owned agricultural cooperatives
- The importance of reliable land tenure systems

We believe that the CSD process of defining policies and practices that work – and then focusing on how to share, replicate, improve upon and adapt these ideas – is the best, if not the only way, to make progress.

I urge all delegations to consider how we translate our learning over the past two years into CSD-17 outcomes that will make a difference:

- CSD should carefully define its unique contributions to the broad themes of CSD-17, and avoid duplication with other entities that already provide international leadership.
- We should continue to focus on implementation and the practical real-world issues that make a difference in getting results on the ground.
- We should continue to press for new, creative partnerships that bring in new ideas, expertise and funding.
- We should find new ways to engage public and private stakeholders.
- We need to champion good governance principles that create enabling conditions for sustainable development.

The United States is committing itself to finding and sharing solutions, and implementing them. At the recent G-20 meeting, President Obama called upon the U.S. Congress to double funding for agricultural development in developing countries to more than \$1 billion in 2010.

In January, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton agreed to work with the international community in forming a global partnership on agriculture and food. We are providing \$5.5 billion to fight global hunger in 2008 and 2009. Already, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is recruiting new agricultural development staff and providing \$29 million for U.S. land grant universities to work with developing countries on agriculture and rural development. The U.S. National Science Foundation is partnering with the Gates Foundation to provide \$50 million for “innovative solutions to critical agricultural challenges in developing countries.”

Our work at CSD is vitally important. We will only succeed if the CSD-17 outcomes move all of us – developed and developing countries, and major groups – to action and implementation that result in protection of the environment and improvement in peoples' lives!