

## INFORMATION NOTE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF CSD-17

05 May 2009

The seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-17) will be a “Policy Session” with a thematic focus on **Agriculture, Rural Development, Land, Drought, Desertification and Africa**, and will convene from 4 to 15 May 2009 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The mandate of CSD-17 is to build on the progress made during the “Review Session” at CSD-16 and to adopt policy decisions that would enable the implementation of practical measures and options related to the thematic areas.

Within just one year, the world has been shaken by an unprecedented spike in the costs of basic foods, by hunger riots and by social tensions that have demonstrated that food insecurity is an irrefutable reality. Estimates suggest that the total number of malnourished people worldwide could rise to 967 million in 2008, up from 923 million in 2007. It is a new reality to which global warming, ever rising trends in energy consumption and declining natural resources are now adding an unprecedented sense of urgency.

The CSD-17 Policy Session, will provide a timely platform for Governments, UN entities, and Major Groups to reinvigorate their resolve to tackle the global food crisis, meet the hunger and malnutrition challenge, and contribute to the achievement of the MDGs and the Johannesburg targets and commitments. It affords us the opportunity to make a difference. We have a historic obligation to our peoples. Let us be bold and ambitious. With leadership, a shared vision and a shared commitment to action, we can work together to make sure this food crisis will be the last one. The main aim of CSD-17 therefore is to produce clear deliverables, practical measures and concrete actions.

The purpose of this information note is to provide a new approach to the CSD-17 Organization of Work. The note will also provide information on the Policy Session’s processes and the related outputs, which are intended to enhance participation by all stakeholders.

### **Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting (IPM)**

Drawing on the obstacles, lessons learned and best practices identified and discussed at CSD-16, six Secretary-General’s Reports addressing each of the thematic areas were submitted for consideration by the IPM. Each report included a number of policy options and possible actions aimed at expediting implementation.

At the conclusion of the IPM, a “Chair’s text,” based on the discussions of the meeting, was prepared and distributed. The goal of this text is to provide a foundation for the subsequent negotiations at the CSD-17 Policy Session in May.

It is well understood that implementation efforts are best undertaken at the local, national, sub-regional or regional levels and that there are no “one-size-fits-all” solutions. In preparation for CSD-17, I therefore strongly encourage all countries to consider the range of policy options and practical actions that will be contained in the Chair’s text, with a view to determining which ones are likely to be most concrete, action-oriented, and applicable to their national, sub-regional and regional needs and circumstances.

## CSD-17 Policy Session

The Commission at its 16<sup>th</sup> Session in 2008 identified a number of challenges and constraints impeding the implementation of internationally agreed goals and targets in the thematic areas of this cycle. During the 17<sup>th</sup> Session, the Commission will take policy decisions on practical measures and actions for addressing the challenges and obstacles identified during CSD-16. In accordance with the decision of CSD-11, the Policy Session will take account of the Chair's text from the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for CSD-17, as well as the Secretary-General's Reports, reports from the CSD Intersessional Meetings in Bangkok and Windhoek, and other relevant inputs.

In order to ensure that effective policy decisions are adopted at CSD-17, the global community needs not only to get a clear picture of the practical measures and options that countries intend to take, but also to concretely identify those measures that require concerted global and regional efforts.

With this in mind, CSD-17 will introduce a number of innovations in the Organization of Work of CSD-17.

**High-level Segment: 13-15 May 2009:** In order to make a notable push to accelerate the implementation of the agreed policy actions, a new approach is proposed. Ministers and high-level Government officials have been invited to attend the High-level Segment to participate interactively in small roundtable discussion groups, and are encouraged to avoid reading formal written statements.

The three Ministerial Roundtables will focus on the following themes:

- ***Responding to the Food Crisis through Sustainable Development*** (Wednesday 13 May, afternoon)
- ***Realizing a Sustainable Green Revolution in Africa*** (Thursday 14 May, morning);
- ***Integrated Management of Land and Water Resources for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development*** (Thursday 14 May, afternoon).

The Ministerial Roundtables provide an opportunity for Ministers to listen to their colleagues, discuss the topics in-depth, and react where appropriate in an interactive dialogue. Pairs of Minister will be invited to chair each Roundtable.

The participation of high-level representatives will be crucial. A number of invited speakers will launch these interactive discussions, including His Royal Highness, the Prince of Orange, Netherlands; and the President of ECOSOC.

The results from the Ministerial Roundtables will be collated in a Ministerial Vision Statement. The session entitled "Summing-up the High-level Segment" on Friday 15 May is intended to allow open and frank exchange of views on the outcome of the Ministerial Roundtables, working toward a shared vision. The vision will not be a negotiated text and therefore does not need to be adopted. The vision will be an annex to the negotiated text of CSD-17.

In summary, the hope is that Ministers and heads of delegations will truly interact by engaging in a dialogue rather than reading written statements.

Furthermore, I would like to inform you about two important events scheduled to take place on 12 May 2009, one day prior to the start of the High-level Segment. On the morning of 12 May, there will be a *Dialogue of Ministers with Major Groups and the UN System* on implementing sustainable development. In the afternoon session Ministers will engage into a similar *Dialogue with the Policy Research Community and the UN System*. These dialogues will contribute a great deal in advancing the implementation of the sustainable development agenda in general and the sustainable agriculture agenda more specifically. I hope that my colleagues will consider the possibility of coming one day early to participate in these dialogues.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the *Dialogue with the Heads of UN Agencies and Chairs of Executive Boards/Governing Councils of UN Agencies*. For the first time, a tripartite dialogue is being organised within the framework of the CSD Organization of Work. This closed and informal Ministerial meeting is intended to allow for a frank exchange of views among Ministers and senior officials within the UN agencies. This session will focus on the specific role of the UN agencies in relation to the policy decisions that result from CSD-17. To provide for small groups and ample time for dialogue, discussions are divided over two breakfast sessions (8:30 to 10:00 am) on the first two days of the High-level Segment.

**Outputs of the High-level Segment:** The official output of CSD-17 will include:

- A negotiated text: negotiated policy decisions on practical measures and options to expedite implementation
- A vision statement: the output of the Ministerial Roundtables
- A summary: the outcomes of the Partnerships Fair, the Learning Centre, the Side Events, and voluntary commitments to mobilize further action by implementation actors, to be posted on the CSD website

The Bureau and I will continue to provide regular updates on the aspects of the Organization of Work in due course.

Let me conclude by reiterating my pledge to work closely with all stakeholders to ensure the success of CSD-17. With the support and collaboration of the Bureau, I present this rich and balanced programme of work aimed at facilitating consensus building and intergovernmental negotiations. Our objective is to adopt and implement practical measures that can effectively address the barriers and obstacles regarding the thematic cluster of CSD-17.

**H.E. Ms. Gerda Verburg**  
**Chairperson of CSD-17**