

Day - Statement by the S&T Community Major Group

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity. CSD-12 concluded that much better harnessing of science and technology will be an indispensable condition for implementing the part of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) related to water, sanitation and human settlements, and for meeting the relevant Millennium Development Goals.

The Scientific and Technological Community is fully committed to making its own contribution towards a better harnessing of science and technology, in order to resolve acute problems of freshwater, sanitation and human settlements. In this regard, we are also committed to making necessary changes in the conduct of science and technology, and to developing strong partnerships with other stakeholders in sustainable development.

Based on the CSD-12 results, the Scientific and Technological Community, covering the natural, social, engineering and health science domains, has identified the following our priorities for action, which we hope will figure in the policy outcome of CSD_13 next April

1. Strengthening capacity to monitor freshwater and to develop integrated indicator sets; 2. Building enhanced national and regional S&T capacities, with particular attention to developing countries;
3. Improving scientific knowledge and transfer of knowledge and clean technologies ; 4. Making scientists, engineers, educators and decision makers better partners in addressing sustainable development issues related to water, sanitation and human settlements.

As I said, the S&T Community will contribute its part in fostering implementation in these priority areas. However, our action alone will not be sufficient. There needs to be a stronger support to science and technology, as it is targeted on these priority areas, by national governments and relevant international organizations. We also need full support by, and strong partnerships with, other stakeholders such as farmers, business and industry, and all other Major Groups represented here.

In some areas, such as monitoring freshwater resources, global capacity, including in many developed countries, has declined during the last two decades. Countries should review and, in most cases, strengthen significantly water related national data collection and monitoring networks, including those that provide real-time data for flood and drought forecasting. These national monitoring systems must be interlinked at the global level, as part of the GlobalEarth Observation System of Systems, recently agreed upon at a Ministerial Meeting.

Major problems related to water, sanitation and human settlements, as identified by CSD- 12, will not be resolved without the involvement of specialists in the natural, social, engineering and health science domains, and of relevant research and development institutions. However, the North - South divide in science and technology is still widening. In many developing countries, efforts to enhance national S&T capacity remain woefully inadequate.

National governments concerned should understand that investments in S&T related to freshwater, sanitation and human settlements are among the highest yielding investments a nation can make to achieve the Millenium Development Goals. Developed countries must be ready to explicitly integrate science and technology capacity building in their international assistance programmes, and to enhance knowledge sharing and transfer of clean technologies.

Mr Chairman, the science is clear; there exists a looming world water crisis. Also, the world of tomorrow will be even more urbanised, with a high percentage of people living in megacities in developing countries. Will we end up facing interrelated water and food shortages, as well as tens of millions of more slum dwellers? Or will we be able to set the path for a sustainable future, through strong partnerships of all stakeholders concerned, and based on the best possible harnessing of science and technology.