

**Opening Remarks by Minister Francis Nhema, CSD-16 Chairman,  
at the ESCAP RIM  
(26 November 2007, Jakarta)**

Distinguished delegates,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to participate in this ESCAP Regional Implementation Meeting for CSD-16.

Regional implementation meetings are an extremely important component of the work of the CSD. They are a key innovative feature of a reformed CSD, which now focuses on implementation in line with the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Regional implementation meetings provide an important opportunity to consider barriers and obstacles that are specific to a region. They enhance the regional dimensions of the work of the CSD. Their outcome will enrich the discussions at the CSD session in May next year when delegates meet in plenary thematic sessions.

In short, the RIMs add depth and breadth to CSD deliberations.

The thematic cluster of issues before the CSD is of great importance to achieving sustainable development and meeting MDGs. Progress in these areas concerns the survival of millions of poor and vulnerable groups struggling daily to put food on the table.

Fighting hunger and poverty is therefore the first priority for CSD16 and CSD-17.

The challenges in our efforts to achieve sustainable agriculture and rural development are made more urgent due to worsening trends in land degradation, drought, desertification and climate change.

The discussions at the African RIM showed that the combination of barriers and constraints facing Africa renders that region particularly vulnerable.

The situation facing Asia-Pacific, likewise, calls for rapid action.

I note with appreciation that the background documents prepared for the ESCAP RIM have provided in-depth analysis of the barriers and constraints facing countries in this region.

I hope our discussions today and tomorrow will provide an opportunity to identify best practices and lessons learned in addressing these barriers and constraints.

I look forward to a fruitful discussion and to a successful RIM.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Indonesia for hosting the RIM. The government and people of Indonesia have demonstrated once again their commitment to sustainable development and to the United Nations.

I have learned from the CSD secretariat of the tremendous efforts undertaken by the ESCAP secretariat in organizing the RIM. I say 'thank you' to my colleagues in ESCAP.

Many UN organizations have been actively engaged in the preparations for this RIM. I wish to thank colleagues from these organizations and look forward to hearing your views and perspectives during our discussions.

I also wish to thank all the member States represented here. Your participation sends a strong signal of your Governments' commitment to sustainable development in this vast, dynamic region. Successes in this region in sustainable development will have far-reaching global implications. I look forward to your participation. Ultimately, your presentations and discussions will lay the groundwork for the policy discussion at CSD-17.

I have noted with satisfaction the presence of a number of major groups' representatives. A warm welcome to you all and I'll be very interested in hearing your views as well.

I cannot emphasise enough the importance of the issues before the CSD and the significance of our discussions here. On behalf of the Bureau and in my capacity as Chair of CSD-16, I once again thank you all for coming and I look forward to your active participation.

Thank you.