

**Remarks by Minister Nhema, Chair of CSD-16
at the Meeting of the Chairpersons of the functional commissions
with the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council**

**29 January 2008, 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
United Nations Headquarters - conference room 8**

**Thank you,
Mr. President.**

**Excellencies,
Colleagues,**

Let me start by thanking the Bureau of ECOSOC for inviting the chairpersons of the functional commissions to this important meeting.

I think this is one more step taken by the Council to strengthen its ties with the functional commissions.

As CSD-16 Chair, I attended a similar dialogue last July in Geneva and I very much appreciated the opportunity for sharing my ideas about the work of the CSD with fellow chairpersons of functional commissions as well as with the Bureau. I enjoyed the discussions in Geneva.

I am sure we'll be having an equally stimulating dialogue this time in New York.

Mr. President,

The relationships between the functional commissions and the ECOSOC go beyond the mere reporting ones, by which all functional commissions submit the reports of their annual sessions to the Council for consideration. In most cases, the Council simply takes note of the reports; in others, the Council is requested to act upon the recommendations of the functional commissions by taking decisions. That request is more likely to lead to some discussions at the Council on the work of the functional commission concerned.

While this has been a time-honored tradition, the impact of such arrangements has been more procedural than substantive. The chairperson who has guided the session of a functional commission may no longer be involved with the work of the commission and is not even invited to report on the outcome of the session.

As we know, a newly-elected chairperson will be speaking on the recent session, in which he or she may or may not have played a significant role.

The Council will need to address this gap if the results of the functional commissions are to be considered in a serious, substantive and in-depth manner, rather than in a procedural fashion.

Mr. President,

I would also like to share with colleagues here some thoughts about the potential contributions of the functional commissions to the Council's annual ministerial review (AMR) and development cooperation forum (DCF). So far, the chairpersons of functional commissions are not invited to address the AMR or DCF.

Since sessions of functional commissions normally have a ministerial segment, I think the results of the ministerial discussions should be shared with ministers attending the AMR.

The functional commissions could submit to AMR a short policy brief highlighting the key points emerging from ministerial segments of functional commissions; the chairpersons of the functional commissions could be invited to address the AMR by introducing the relevant policy brief.

Mr. President,

Relations between the Council and the functions commissions could be and should be dynamic and multi-dimensional. Functional commissions could do more in involving the participation of the Bureau of ECOSOC in their sessions.

On behalf of the CSD-16 Bureau, I would like to invite the ECOSOC Bureau to attend CSD-16 and would like to invite the President of the Council to address the opening of the session.

Since my election as CSD-Chair, I have undertaken a number of activities in preparation of CSD-16. As I mentioned early, I attended the dialogue session with the Bureau of ECOSOC last July in Geneva. In September, I attended the COP 8 of the UNCCD and briefed fellow Ministers on CSD-16 preparations. Also, in September I attended the Secretary-General's High-level Event on Climate Change and held informal consultations with elected Bureau members.

The Bureau met formally last December on the organization of work for CSD-16 and reviewed the status of preparations on the margin of the International Conference on Combating Desertification held in Beijing last week.

**Mr. President,
Colleagues,**

The preparations for CSD-16 are going well and I intend to brief delegations in New York on the work we have undertaken so far. As you know, CSD-16 will focus on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. The Commission will address these issues in an integrated and balanced manner, focusing on the inter-linkages among these issues. As this is a review session, the Bureau is proposing an organization of work that will assist in identifying barriers and constraints, as well as lessons learned and best practices.

The summary that will be prepared under my guidance will pave the way for CSD-17, which will be a policy session.

In this regard, I would like to use this occasion to highlight the importance of close coordination between the CSD and the Council, as this year the Council is also focusing on sustainable development.

In order to avoid duplication, I would propose for the Bureau's consideration that the Council build upon the work of CSD-16 in the thematic cluster of agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. I would be delighted to have the opportunity to present the outcome of CSD-16 ministerial segment to the AMR this summer.

Another area for the Council's closer attention is the coordination of the work of UN agencies. In this regard, the Council has institutional strengths not matched by any functional commissions. As a chairperson of a functional commission, I would be looking forward to hearing more from the Bureau on how the Council could further strengthen its central role in coordinating the development activities of the UN system.

**Mr. President,
Colleagues,**

If someone wishes to have a general idea of what constitutes the global development agenda, he or she may find the answer by looking at the agenda and work programmes of the Council and the functional commissions.

If we, collectively, are able to make tangible progress in the work of the Council and the functional commissions, we can make a huge impact on poverty reduction and sustainable development at the local, national and global levels.

As Chair of CSD-16, I am committed to do my very best to help make that happen.

Thank you for your attention.