

**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SIXTEENTH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT,
HON. FRANCIS D NHEMA
TO THE G77 AND CHINA GROUP AT THE 8TH CONFERENCE OF
PARTIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO
COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 12-14 SEPTEMBER 2007: MADRID**

The Chairman of the G77 and China

Members of the Bureau

Excellences

Honourable delegates here present at the Eighth Conference of Parties of the United Nations Conference to Combat Desertification

The UNCCD Secretariat

Allow me Ladies and Gentlemen, to express profound gratitude for the support and confidence you have in Zimbabwe by electing my country to the Chairmanship of the 16th Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).

Mr Chairman please accept my appreciation of the support and interest shown in CSD 16 preparations through the contributions and deliberations of COP8.

Allow me to reflect briefly with you, the context of the work of the 16th session of the Commission from the G77 and China perspective.

This current third implementation cycle of the CSD incorporating the 16th Session addresses the thematic cluster of agriculture, rural development, land, desertification, drought and Africa:

Agriculture and Rural Development

Chapter 14 of Agenda 21, on sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD), notes that, by the year 2025, 83 percent of the expected global population of 8.5 billion will be living in developing countries.

When CSD first reviewed SARD at its third session in 1995, it was disappointed and concerned with the limited and slow progress towards sustainable agriculture and rural development in many countries.

Agriculture was a major focus of CSD-8 in 2000. The Commission reaffirmed that the major objectives of SARD are to increase food production and enhance food security in an environmentally sound manner so as to contribute to sustainable natural resource management.

Land

Integrated planning and management of land resources is the subject of Chapter 10 of Agenda 21.

In its decision CSD 8 and 3 on integrated planning and management of land resources, the Commission noted the importance of addressing sustainable development through a holistic approach, in order to meet the priority challenges. The Commission identified priorities for future work, such as:

- mitigation of land degradation;
- access to land ;
- critical sectors and issues such as biodiversity, drylands, wetlands etc.
- international cooperation, for capacity-building, information-sharing and technology transfer

Governments were urged to support the implementation of a number of important international agreements, including UNCCD, CBD, UNFCCC.

Desertification and droughts

Deserts are among the ‘fragile ecosystems’ addressed by Agenda 21, and “combating desertification and drought” is the subject of Chapter 12. This thematic area has been discussed by the CSD in several sessions.

In December 1992, the General Assembly agreed (resolution 47/188) on an International Convention to Combat Desertification. The Convention was adopted in Paris on 17 June 1994 and entered into force on 26 December 1996. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPI) recognizes UNCCD as a tool for poverty alleviation and its major role in sustainable development.

Poverty

The years following the Rio Conference (1992) have witnessed an increase in the number of people living in absolute poverty, particularly in developing countries. The enormity and complexity of the poverty endangers the social fabric, undermines economic development and the environment, and threatens political stability in many countries.

The General Assembly, in its 1997 Programme for the further Implementation of Agenda 21 (para 27) decided that poverty eradication should be an overriding theme of sustainable development for the coming years. Poverty is addressed in Chapter II of the JPI.

Africa

Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, sustainable development has remained elusive for many African countries. In Africa poverty remains a major challenge and most countries on the continent remain marginalized and have not benefited fully from globalisation.

The WSSD was called upon to reinvigorate the commitment of the international community to address the special challenges faced by Africa and give effect to a new vision based on concrete actions for the implementation of Agenda 21 in Africa.

The implementation of Agenda 21 and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including MDGs and JPI, require a substantially increased effort, both by countries themselves and by the rest of the international community.

Mr Chairman

The thematic cluster of agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification is the core of the UNCCD and is critical to all countries and there is need to progress in all these areas to meet MDGs.

As CSD -16 chair, I would like to give assurance that I will do my utmost to ensure that the Commission will push the CSD 16 cluster agenda into the 21st century and achieve concrete results for the developing world. We want to ensure the issues raised in CSD 15 are addressed for the success of CSD16.

I also pledge to work towards real and concrete results at CSD-16 in support of sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman allow me to make a special appeal to all governments, all relevant international and regional organizations, the Economic and Social Council, UN programme funds and regional economic commissions, specialized agencies, international financial institutions, the Global Environmental Facility, as well as other intergovernmental organization and major groups to take timely actions to ensure the effective follow up and implementation of the CSD 16 thematic cluster programmes.

We call upon the international community to live up to its promises of supporting sustainable development initiatives and programmes including the UNCCD especially in developing countries, particularly Africa by making real and tangible progress in turning its commitments into action.

REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETINGS (RIM) OF THE CSD

In accordance with the provisions of the JPOI of the WSSD and based on the recommendations of the 11th Session of the CSD, the Economic and Social Council decided in 2003 to allow effective consideration of regional and sub-regional inputs throughout the implementation cycle. I count on G77 and China's full participation and support to ensure this important group can claim ownership of the process and its outcomes.

The Africa RIM, organised by the UN Economic Commission for Africa is scheduled to be held on: 22-25 October 2007 in Addis Ababa Ethiopia. The meeting will:

- Contribute to advancing the implementation of Agenda 21 and JPOI

- Focus on the thematic cluster of issues to be addressed in the ongoing implementation cycle;
- Provide input to the Secretary-General's reports and the sessions of CSD.
- Provide for contributions from groups.

As a contribution to the work of CSD-16, the Regional Commissions will organise the Regional Implementation Meetings (RIM).

Let me conclude by giving you other regional meetings dates:

Western Asia RIM

To be held on: 4-6 November 2007 in Cairo, Egypt

Organized by: UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Asia and the Pacific RIM

To be held on: (tba) in (tba)

Organized by: UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Europe and North America RIM

To be held on: 28-29 January 2008 in Geneva, Switzerland organized by: UN Economic Commission for Europe