



The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

**Statement by
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Permanent Representative of Iceland
to the United Nations**

at the

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of the Economic and Social Council
High-level segment**

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This session of ECOSOC is important in many ways. It is important that we make the first Development Cooperation Forum a success. The timing of the themes makes it especially important. Our efforts for sustainable development are facing new multiple challenges posed by climate change, the food crisis and increased energy costs. The session is important because we are halfway towards the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals. It is therefore a good time for the new Development Cooperation Forum to take stock of the challenges ahead.

Last year's Annual Ministerial Review emphasized the important role of the Council in reviewing the progress made in implementing the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The AMR is a valuable contribution to ECOSOC's work. I welcome the voluntary national presentations at this session and thank the respective Governments for their contribution to our work.

High food prices are a matter of extreme anxiety in many countries – a matter of life and death. As often in times of crisis, it is women, in particular mothers, who bear the brunt. They are in the front line in trying to feed families. In the long term we must look for sustainability. Our present food production and distribution systems are creaking under a massive increase in demand and added stress from climate change. We must look for solutions which are sustainable – quick fixes are not an option.

Increased productivity in food production is crucial. Markets alone can not resolve these crises. We are still at the initial stage of analyzing the problem. The UN's role is important and we commend the Secretary General for his initiative and leadership.

Iceland is ready to do its part. The World Food Programme plays a crucial role in mobilizing responses to food emergencies. The Government of Iceland responded to the extraordinary appeal by the World Food Programme to meet emergency needs and will continue to monitor developments.

Gender equality and the active role of women in agriculture are also significant factors in fighting the food crises. The Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) has cooperated with its partner countries in promoting equal rights and active participation of women in the economy, thus strengthening local food security. We have also increased our support of the work of UNIFEM.

Vital to sustainable agriculture is the fight against land degradation and desertification, made worse by climate change. Iceland has over 100 years of experience in reclaiming land from erosion. We have concentrated on bringing together expertise from around the world through international conferences and we are aiming at launching a UN University programme on soil technology.

I would like to mention briefly the importance of sustainable fisheries. Ninety-five per cent of those who live from fisheries are in the developing world and a billion people depend on fisheries for their main intake of protein. With increased demand for food, it becomes more important than ever before to make sure that fishing is conducted in a sustainable manner.

The UN University Fisheries Training Programme in Iceland reflects our emphasis on the importance of providing training and sharing technology for sustainable fisheries, which can provide increased food supply for some of the poorest. The Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) has concentrated on capacity-building projects in the field of fisheries in southern Africa, Asia, and Central America.

Climate change and high energy prices are challenges that also call for urgent action. Many oil-importing developing countries, including Small Island Developing States, suffer the most as their economies are more oil-intensive and less able to get through the financial turmoil created by higher oil-import costs. Transformation of their energy systems is urgent.

Iceland can serve as an example of how to battle increased oil prices and climate change through comprehensive transformation of the energy system. We have transformed Iceland from being predominantly a fossil-fuel user into a world leader as regards the production and consumption of clean energy. Now 100% of our electricity is produced from clean energy sources, and over 75% of our total energy needs, including fuel for cars and shipping, are met by hydro or geothermal power.

We believe that if Iceland could do this, so can others. Our experience from harnessing our renewable energy resources can benefit other nations. In particular geothermal energy can play an important role in this aspect in many parts of the world. Contrary to what many people believe, geothermal energy is accessible in a great many countries, many of them developing countries, but it has not been harnessed due to lack of know-how to do so. Renewable energy is the solution but it can be hard to adopt new technology if it is not at hand. Transfer of technology is therefore crucial.

For almost 30 years the Icelandic government has operated and funded the United Nations University Geothermal Training Programme, training hundreds of young professionals, both men and women from 40 developing countries. These professionals have later become instrumental in the buildup of geothermal energy projects in their home countries. This is one kind of technological transfer that we believe is helpful and which should be expanded in the years to come.

The potential for hydro power is also vast. Africa, for example, is at the moment only using 7% of its potential hydro power. Iceland will be hosting in June 2009 an international conference on sustainable hydro-power. I sincerely hope that many participants from developing countries will be able to attend.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we face a challenge and what is required for the solution is political will and more effective international cooperation both with respect to technology transfer and innovative financing for sustainable development.