

Introduction to the Secretary-General's Reports
IPM for CSD-17

Policy options and actions for expediting progress in implementation:
agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification, Africa and inter-
linkages

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Madame Chairperson,
Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General of UNDESA
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to introduce the Secretary-General's reports on policy options and actions for expediting progress in implementation in the six themes under consideration during the current cycle of the CSD plus the report on inter-linkages and cross-cutting issues. The documents are available on the DSD website under reference numbers E/CN.17/2009/3 to E/CN.17/2009/9.

These reports have been prepared in response to the issues highlighted in the report of the 16th session of the CSD. They incorporate the cross-cutting issues identified by the Commission at its 11th session.

The objective of these reports is to facilitate discussions during the Intergovernmental Preparatory meeting of CSD-17 and subsequently at the main Commission session in May.

On behalf of the Secretariat of the CSD, I would like to thank UN agencies, including regional commissions and secretariats of UN conventions, as well as those major groups who provided valuable inputs to these reports.

Madame Chairperson, Dear Colleagues

As an overall introduction to the complete set of reports, it is no secret that the global system of agriculture and resource management suffers from several problems.

- Most significant problem is the persistence of hunger and malnutrition despite high and rising aggregate food production. These are the most frequently mentioned of MDGs.
- A second problem, which erupted dramatically last year, is the propensity for price volatility with severe consequences for poor and vulnerable

communities. The global community recognized this as early as the International Development Strategy 1962, and called for commodity price stabilization as a key plank of development.

- Third, the widening gap between finite land and water resources, stagnant yields, and rising demands for food, non-food production (especially bio energy), and ecosystem needs, especially protection of forests and biodiversity and protection of soils. Avoiding the potential conflict between competing uses will require the adoption of far sighted policies and institutional mechanisms.
- Fourth, climate change is a threat that stares us in the face today, and poses a significant threat to global agriculture. The response options to this threat are not yet in place.
- Fifth, there is much that we know about sustainable and equitable management of natural resources, including soils, water, and biodiversity, which for one reason or another fails to be practiced sufficiently widely. A major policy goal is to create conditions in which such practices are used at a universal scale.
- Sixth, analogously, there is much that we know about rural development and empowerment, including empowerment of women. We know of excellent examples, successful practices, some at pilot scale, and some even at national scales, but again these have not been replicated widely enough or scaled up sufficiently to the requisite levels.
- Seventh, because of a combination of ecological and institutional reasons, agricultural productivity in Africa did not experience the rapid growth of the green revolution transition. A number of initiatives have emerged to push for this transformation within the continent's ecological and institutional context, and these need to be supported.
- Finally, yield increases through the green revolution did take place in other regions they are widely believed to be unsustainable because of overuse of resources. There is now a need to go beyond overuse into the next generation of a truly "green" revolution.

Madame Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

These eight points are not new. If you look at policy decisions and analyses over the previous decade—indeed, over the last few decades, you would see them repeated again and again. Yet, like the poor, we still have them with us. The Secretary General's reports have been prepared against the backdrop of these concerns.

Let me briefly present the key messages of these reports.

The agricultural report stresses the urgency of expanding food production to feed the expected global population of 9 billion people by 2050, mostly in the developing world. It underscores the need for improving access to agricultural inputs, rehabilitating the irrigation and marketing infrastructure, promoting practices to decrease post harvest losses, and strengthening capacities of research, extension and marketing systems. It asks for gender-responsive interventions across all policy and institutional domains in order to enhancing the role of women. Finally, recognizing the finiteness of freshwater as well as land resources, it advocates integrated management approaches that can enhance both water and land productivity.

The key message of the report on rural development is the need for multi-sectoral policies at local levels using an integrated approach and focused on enhancing human and social capital. Such approaches serve to improve access of rural communities to economic and social services and infrastructure, strengthen the agro-industrial base, and promote non-farm employment. They are also the most effective means of introducing sustainable management of natural resources, building capacity for adaptation to climate change, and harnessing the power of technology, including information and communication technologies. An important policy goal is to build upon and facilitate the replication and scaling up of successful experiences.

The land report argues that sustainable land management can help, inter alia, in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Policies are needed to limit competition for and reduce pressure on land, including through effective stakeholder engagement at all levels, local ownership of policies and practices, greater accountability and transparency of land planning and administration, and a pro-poor stance.

The drought report advocates building of adaptation capacity and community resilience, including through dissemination of sustainable water management practices through project activities as well as economic incentives. A good example of innovative schemes is an index-based weather insurance system, which can facilitate investment decisions and reduce financial risks for small holders. Finally, it draws attention to the potential of bio-technical innovation that have led to drought-tolerant crops in many countries.

The report on desertification calls for actions that link land-use and livelihoods to sustainable development, including preparation and implementation of national action plans to combat desertification in line with the national development priorities. Integrating these plans into national development frameworks can ensure that implementation is not affected due to lack of

funding. More importantly, these plans should aim to enhance the ability of rural populations to adapt to climate change and variability.

Madame Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now turn to the main conclusions of the Africa report.

The report recognizes that Africa faces important challenges because of lower per capita income, slower growth, and a number of adverse ecological trends. Many of these challenges relate to agriculture and by extension to the issues of rural development, drought, desertification, and land. As such, in approaching the sustainable development agenda in Africa, the report takes the improvement in agricultural productivity as a strategic entry point. The components of such a strategy are well known: enhanced provision of inputs and infrastructure, credit and education, agricultural extension to promote modern farming practices, and support for the strengthening of supply chains in order to develop higher value-added products locally. Of particular importance in African ecological conditions are land degradation and desertification, and the report advocates appropriate policies in these regards. While biofuels represent an opportunity for many African countries, it is important to ensure that national food security is not jeopardized. Finally, the promotion of peaceful environment is an essential pre-requisite for sustainable development.

Lastly, the inter-linkages report highlights that all six thematic issues under consideration are closely inter-linked and need to be examined in a holistic and coordinated manner. These inter-linkages can take the form of both positive and negative externalities. A common theme that runs through all reports is the need for capacity building, technology transfer, creating an enabling environment and promoting partnerships.

Among the cross cutting issues, the one to which I would like to draw your attention is climate change. On the one hand, climate change is already affecting water patterns and therefore agricultural productivity, crop failure, food security, economic loss, and livestock death. On the other hand, measures to combat climate change will need to keep the concerns of rural communities, especially the rural poor in mind. This makes it important to examine and agree upon measures that address adaptation and mitigation in a manner that can also enhance the resilience and capacity of rural communities.

I hope you will find these reports helpful in your deliberations this week.

Let me close by saying that to facilitate your work, the Secretariat has revamped its website to make it more user friendly and to provide you with an access to all

relevant documents and information. This website is displayed here. You will hear more about it on Thursday when the Chair briefs the delegates about the preparations for CSD-17.

Thank you for your attention.