



## THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

STATEMENT TO THE 17<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTNew York, 13 May 2009

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to join the Chair of the Commission on Sustainable Development in welcoming you to the United Nations for the High-level Segment of the Commission's 17<sup>th</sup> session.

Many say our world is at a tipping point. If we do not act together, if we do not act responsibly, if we do not act now, we risk slipping into a cycle of poverty, degradation, and despair.

Twenty-two years ago, the United Nations advanced the idea of sustainable development as a way of escaping from this cycle. This idea of an integrated and comprehensive approach to development remains as valid today as ever. It shows how to address the climate crisis, the food crisis and the energy crisis. It contains durable solutions to the financial crisis and global recession.

We must follow the wisdom of the Brundtland Report. We must pursue "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

To do that, we must deal with climate change. As you know, this is the year of climate change.

We look to the December climate negotiations in Copenhagen to seal a deal that will enable us to pursue climate action on all fronts. A deal that covers adaptation, mitigation and the deployment of clean technologies. A deal that will reverse deforestation. A deal that will build capacity, and mobilize financial resources for developing countries.

To that end, I have invited all Heads of States and Government of UN Member States and Observers to a high-level event on climate change on 22 September here in New York.

This will be the *only* international climate meeting before Copenhagen that will bring together *all* world leaders – from the major emitters to the most vulnerable countries.

The agenda will reflect the latest progress in the climate change convention negotiations. It will also integrate political developments that may have occurred in other fora, such as this one, or the forthcoming G-8 meeting.

Most of all, it will focus on solutions and providing the necessary political impetus to seal a deal in Copenhagen.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

There is a strong link between climate change and the issues before this session. Sustainable agriculture can contribute to climate change mitigation. On the other hand, if left unchecked, climate change will affect agricultural production and exacerbate drought and desertification.

This will have a devastating impact on the poor. It will particularly affect women, who make up a significant portion of agricultural producers in many highly vulnerable countries.

I hope CSD-17 will contribute to the climate discussions and the successful outcome of the Copenhagen conference.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now turn to the issue of food security. The food crisis is not yet behind us. Indeed, it may have widened its scope.

High food prices mean 100 million people in low-income countries are at risk of joining the ranks of the malnourished. In consequence, the World Food Programme will need to increase its budget from \$500 million to \$750 million to maintain its operations.

On the positive side, however, there is broad-based international support for addressing this issue. In January, Prime Minister Zapatero of Spain convened a High-level Meeting on "Food Security for All". The meeting agreed a comprehensive, long-term approach that links nutrition, food security, agriculture and trade. Success will depend on partnerships among Governments, civil society, farmers' organizations, businesses and international organizations.

I am also encouraged by this Commission's initiative to convene a Ministerial Roundtable on a sustainable green revolution for Africa. Investing in an African green revolution will serve not just food security but progress across all the Millennium Development Goals, including environmental sustainability.

To achieve a Green Revolution, African farmers, must have access to land and security of tenure. They also need access to markets, technology and improved infrastructure.

And when I say farmers, I mean women, as well as men. Indeed, farming and non-farming sectors alike must empower Africa's women. Women must be full partners in development, so they can lift themselves and their communities out of poverty.

We must also remember that when women are empowered, so are their children. They are more likely to receive education, proper nutrition and health care. As many micro-credit schemes across the world can testify, investment in women is the best investment for the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are in the throes of a global recession. In such times, things can deteriorate frighteningly fast. It is but a short step from hunger to starvation, from disease to death.

I am pleased that the President of the General Assembly has convened a United Nations Conference at the Highest Level on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development in June.

This is a most timely intervention, and I hope it will buttress the commitments made by the world's leading economies at the G-20 London Summit in April.

The international community must offer short-term emergency measures to meet critical needs. But it must also make longer-term investments to promote food production and agricultural development, enhance food security and maintain and accelerate momentum towards the MDGs.

At the recent G-20 Summit in London I urged governments to help all countries to overcome the current crises in an integrated manner. I believe they heard my call. They agreed on a genuine global stimulus that will advance the interests of all nations, not a few.

They stood against protectionism. They reaffirmed their commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. And they called on the United Nations to work with other global institutions to establish a mechanism to monitor the impact of the crisis on the poorest and most vulnerable

We have moved to establish such a mechanism. Our system-wide vulnerability monitoring and alert mechanism will collect real-time information on the social effects of the economic crisis worldwide.

It will help Governments to monitor the effects of their decisions on the most vulnerable. I hope it will help us to mitigate the impact of the crisis.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The challenges before us are daunting.

Within the United Nations family of organizations and agencies, our actions must be coherent. I would like to commend the Bureau and the Chair of the Commission for their focus on how this multi-stakeholder forum can contribute to the UN system's "delivery as one".

Madam Chair, I particularly appreciate your initiative to organize Ministerial dialogues with the heads of governing councils and executive boards of various UN bodies, and with the heads of UN agencies, civil society groups and the policy research community.

I know the delegates have been engaged in intense negotiations over the past week to come up with a concrete package of policy options and measures for sustainable agricultural and rural development agenda.

The decisions taken here must help to revitalize agriculture and support the productivity and resilience of small farmers, in particular, to achieve food security for all.

I wish you a positive conclusion to this session. The bottom line is that this CSD must succeed. It must inspire the world to address the multiple challenges we face in an integrated and comprehensive manner.

Thank you.