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UN Commission on Sustainable Development High Level Segment
Remarks for Official Opening
10:00 am, Wednesday, May 13, 2009
(Strict Three Minute Time Limit)

Thank you, Madame Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to address this important meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

While I have only recently assumed my role as Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, my involvement in Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development is longstanding. For example, I led our work in the U.S. government to develop organic food standards. Indeed, a strong interest in sustainability has defined my career.

I share that interest with the new U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack. He recently said that if he had to summarize the vision he has for USDA in one word, "it would be 'sustainable.'" Also notably, the U.S. Agency for International Development chose "Environment and Food Security" as its theme for this year's Earth Day celebration. Clearly, through a redefinition of its domestic and international vision, the Obama Administration recognizes the importance of dialogues such as the one we are holding today.

Throughout this CSD cycle, the United States emphasized three critical contributors to sustainable development. We highlighted the role of research and education in discovering ways to address problems and to prepare the next generation. We also focused on the importance of empowering people and communities so they can work together to meet current and future demands. And we clearly acknowledged that communication and information technologies powerfully facilitate progress. Undergirding all three of these factors is our commitment to ensuring that women fully participate in all that we do.

We need lofty goals and I believe sustainable agriculture is a lofty goal we must all strive for. However, CSD is best when it is promoting practical detailed solutions. Arguably the most lasting legacy of CSD Eight's look at agriculture was the FAO lead Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) partnership. We continue to believe it is these practical solutions such as the new nutrient partnership that, through information exchange, will help facilitate the wise and judicious use of fertilizers as well as proposals on: pollinators; rural cooperatives; rural urban market linkages and, using ecological land potential in

land management and planning, that will be our most lasting legacy This is exciting work.

In closing, let me say that the timing of this CSD session is auspicious, and the results from it will set an important course for the way forward. With all the concerns facing the world community today – including climate change - it is incumbent on us to find ways to improve peoples lives while protecting the environment to meet the needs of current and future generations. I appreciate your commitment, and look forward to working with you.

Thank you.