



## OPENING STATEMENT

**H.E. DR. LUIS FERRATÉ FELICE, MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT OF GUATEMALA AND CHAIR OF CSD 18**

Distinguished Assistant Secretary General for Economic Development, Mr. Jomo K. Sundaram,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I declare open the Second Session of the 18th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

In the first place I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Commission for electing me as the President for this session. We come together to discuss a set of issues that are, to put it mildly, very complex. Unlike the last cycle that dealt with themes everyone could relate to, such as agriculture and drought, this cycle involves themes that lie at the very core of how countries decide to manage their natural resources, it involves reviewing production systems that have generated some wealth but have also generated resource depletion at a critical limit. These are sensitive issues. Nonetheless, with a planet in crisis with climate change and ocean acidification we need to undertake this review. We need an honest dialogue and above all we need to act. As a Minister that knows the impacts of climate change, particularly for developing countries, I welcome you this important session.

The environmental crises impacting our oceans, atmosphere and forests, differ from other global crises that have a beginning, a turning point and an end. The environmental crises surpass this pattern and trigger long-term impacts and some are still unknown. Our response and our learning curve need to correspond to this truly different scenario. The relevance of this forum and of the UN rests on our capacity to move beyond these crises and implement strong multilateral measures that match the scale and complexities of the challenges we face.

Looking forward to the next two weeks, I am anxious to continue learning from all of you regarding your priorities, the persistent obstacles you face and the success stories you can share with us, when reviewing matters on our agenda: transport, chemicals, waste management, mining, the ten year framework of programmes on sustainable production and consumption patterns, interlinkages, cross cutting issues and means of implementation, as well as a special day for the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). I hope our deliberations set the basis, the tone and the level of ambition for a successful policy session next year.

In addition, we have identified some common challenges that are cross-cutting in all the themes: 1. Linking economic growth for each of the themes under review with environmental sustainability 2. Transferring and accessing technologies that are appropriate to the receipt countries needs and that generate resilience 3. Additional financing to ODA, that needs to be considered as long term investment for all countries and, 4. Opportunities to leapfrog towards more efficient systems.



**Transport** is responsible for almost a quarter of the emissions of GHGs from fossil fuel sources and it is the fastest-growing sector with respect to such emissions. Ambitious reduction targets should trigger shifting towards sustainable transportation systems, particularly advocating public transport.

Adequate and affordable multimodal transportation networks empower people to move, communicate and exchange goods and services. In many rural areas physical isolation and lagging infrastructure are factors that pose major obstacles to eradicating poverty. In urban areas, challenges include affordability, convenience and coping with the health impacts of emissions from transportation fuels. Greater international cooperation in supporting public transport investments in developing countries is needed in order to leapfrog towards more efficient transportation systems.

**Chemicals** have played an indispensable role in fostering economic growth, improving standards of living and protecting public health. At the same time, the sound management of chemicals is still not a priority in the sustainable development agenda. There is a lack of awareness of the magnitude and danger of the use of chemicals in the absence of sound management. Chemicals have had a long-term impact on our soil, food and water chains as well as on our health; their lasting consequences are still unaccounted.

A concrete deliverable I would like to see out of CSD would be to raise the importance of this issue in the political and policy agenda. Integrating sound chemical management in national sustainable development plans and strategies is essential as well as its environmental liabilities and ecological footprint.

Making the links visible between the sound management of chemicals and poverty eradication is also equally important. Few developing countries have the required legal, institutional, technical capacities or adequate laboratory capacities to monitor chemicals in the environment. Even when risks of certain chemicals to human health and environment are known, it is often difficult for developing countries to replace these toxic chemicals as they are highly effective and cheap to produce.

**Waste management** has become a critical issue, particularly toxic waste. With rapid urbanization necessary urban services such as water supply, waste water treatment, sewerage system, and solid waste management are needed at an accelerated rate.

The environmental impacts of certain elements of the waste streams such as plastics, metals, and glass, as well as e-waste and open pit mining waste, stem not only from the method of waste treatment and disposal but also from indirect impacts due to the loss of resources from the supply chain. It is essential that wastes be considered resources that can create employment and business opportunities. Waste collection and recycling in developing countries is a source of livelihood that is often accompanied by unsafe and unsanitary conditions. Designing sound waste management policies



while also providing formal employment and sanitary conditions remains a development challenge. Integrating the 3Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and I would like to add a 4<sup>th</sup> R, revalue is important not only in waste management but also in the SCP cluster.

The story of **mining** is deeply embedded in some of our country's history. Long voyages were once made into unknown territories in search of gold, in search of *El Dorado*. These minerals were found hidden away in the depth of our mountains and our oceans. Mining continues to be practiced in a small scale but has also grown into a large-scale industry. It has also been an important source of income generation and revenues accruing to governments, and at the same time it has triggered social tensions, violence and confrontation as well as pollution and great environmental liabilities. In the evolution of this industry, however, environmental and social impacts have been neglected or only superficially addressed. It is only recently that countries are starting to evaluate how mining can be done with less environmental impacts and with a wider benefit to the nearby communities such as making them shareholders. I encourage all of you to have a constructive dialogue. We need to pragmatically discuss the kind of policies are needed to integrate mining into the sustainable development path.

This year, the United Nations is intensively reviewing the progress made during the last 10 years in achieving the MDGs. The challenge for this CSD cycle will be to agree on a **10 year framework of programmes on consumption and production** as set out in the Johannesburg plan of implementation that benefits particularly the most vulnerable. For countries, like my own that need to eradicate poverty and end hunger, SCP becomes a very lofty goal, unless we link SCP with poverty eradication and the elimination of hunger. This challenge, however, is not impossible, if we change our attitudes and behaviors and adopt cleaner mechanisms aligned with the principles of sustainable development.

In Guatemala, indigenous communities are among the most vulnerable populations; however, they are often the best stewards for the environment. Changing our patterns of consumption and production in many cases requires us to look outside the box, for solutions may be found even in our villages! A successful green economy will be defined by our own efforts to alleviate poverty while generating economic growth that achieves a win-win situation with our environment. While this session should reap the low hanging fruit and scale up practices that have proven successful, we need to look at incentives in trade and the available financing option in order to translate this framework into action. The environmental footprint should be an indicator for achieving SCP and reducing it should be one of its main goals.

Before concluding, many preparatory activities have preceded this session. I would like to thank the members of the Bureau and the Secretariat of the CSD for their dedication and commitment for a successful session. Innovations such as the thematic seminars in New York have prepared delegates for the tasks ahead. Regional and inter-sessional meetings have also laid the foundation for this session. Many of you have traveled a long way to be here with us. By the time we leave CSD 18, we will all be better informed and, hopefully better equipped to translate our words into actions. As was said by our previous Chair, Swords into ploughshares, words into action!