

Chairman's Summary - Part I (*unedited*)

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CSD-16 Chairman's summary

Part one

I. Opening of the session

1. The sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16) was opened on the morning of 5 May 2008 by the Chairman, Honourable Minister H.E. Mr. Francis Nhema, Minister of Environment and Tourism of Zimbabwe. In his opening statement, the Chairman emphasized that the thematic cluster for the 2008/2009 cycle - agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification, and Africa - is of crucial importance to achieve sustainable development goals. The issues under discussion are complex and interlinked, and therefore need to be addressed in an integrated manner. In examining these issues, attention should be paid to issues such as a fair international trade system and improved market access for developing countries, as well as the need for a real partnership for Africa to reach the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The ongoing food crisis highlights the urgency of the Commission's agenda, as high and rising food prices worsen hunger and malnutrition for hundreds of millions of people and threaten to reverse progress towards the MDGs. The Chairman reiterated the importance of major groups, and called upon all countries to work together to make this session a success.

2. In considering the proposal on the organization of work of the session, the Chairman pointed out that the arrangement for the SIDS Day was a compromise solution and that it should not be interpreted as constituting a precedent for future SIDS Review. He thanked member States for the flexibility they had demonstrated in resolving the scheduling difficulty. A representative of AOSIS emphasized that the Commission committed to review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and that as such that review should be given equal importance to the other topics discussed by the Commission. The representative supported the Chairman's statement that the current working arrangement for the SIDS Day not set a precedent.

3. In his opening remarks, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs noted that recent years have seen strong growth in the world economy and, if this growth continues and if its benefits are widely shared, there is reason to be optimistic that millions more people will emerge from poverty. He highlighted major challenges in the themes that are considered at the current session, especially emphasizing the rise in world food prices, slow agricultural productivity growth and the impact of climate change on agriculture and, in particular, on the livelihoods of those people living in dry-lands. He underlined extraordinary challenges that Africa continues to face on its road towards sustainable development and a need for an African green revolution. Emphasizing the vulnerability of Small Island Developing States, he underlined that greater investment in the expansion and diversification of the rural economy in SIDS and the development of stronger inter-sectoral linkages between agriculture, fisheries and other sectors of the economy will be important to build resilience. Regarding the review of CSD-13 decisions on water and sanitation, he pointed to mixed results in implementation - by 2015 the world may meet the water target but not the sanitation target.

4. Outcomes of inter-sessional events held between September 2007 and April 2008 that contributed to the Commission's sixteenth session were presented by delegates of the governments that organized these events (see Annex).

II. Overall review: general statements

5. Christopher Flavin, from the Worldwatch Institute, gave a keynote speech to introduce the session. He presented some thoughts based on the report State of the World 2008, which focuses on Innovations for a Sustainable Economy. He stressed that, unless a sustainable economy is achieved, current trends of food and energy crisis will continue and deepen as many developing countries increase their resource consumption while per capita consumption in developed countries remains high. In order to reverse the current trends, a strong political commitment is necessary so that investment in agriculture is increased and new approaches are adopted, particularly empowering small farmers to take on new technologies in sustainable agriculture. Also, he stressed the importance of new energy technologies, especially renewable energy. Commitments to renewable energy are accelerating, and countries at the forefront now will be the most successful in the future. It is important to ensure that developing countries are not left behind in the development and use of these technologies. The current challenges need to be met as a global community.

6. In their general statements, countries expressed their satisfaction with Secretary General's reports prepared for the Commission and with the CSD matrix as a useful way to organize information and share good practices; but it also was mentioned that the matrix needs further development to keep it relevant and useful, particularly to developing countries. Some countries also highlighted the Regional Implementation Meetings, as well as the work of the regional commissions.

7. Delegations stressed that an open and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system is needed so that all countries, including developing countries, can attain sustained economic growth and food security. They called for the successful and timely conclusion of the stalled negotiations on agriculture in the Doha development round of trade negotiations.

8. Many speakers welcomed Africa as a special theme in this thematic cycle, but also emphasized that it needs to stay a cross-cutting issue on the agenda of all sessions of the Commission. They underlined the enormous challenges facing this continent in its efforts to achieve sustainable development especially in the thematic areas under review. Effective sectoral partnerships with development partners are necessary, including through regional development initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

9. Many speakers highlighted the particular conditions and special needs of the developing countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, small island developing States, least developed countries and landlocked developing countries.

10. Many delegations emphasized the importance of the water and sanitation review, stating that integrated water resources management with strong stakeholder participation and a gender and pro-poor perspective is a key instrument for promoting balanced development by integrating water considerations in other sectoral policies.

11. It was stressed that poverty eradication remains a global priority and an overarching objective of sustainable development and that it will not be achieved unless sustainable agriculture and rural development are implemented and the efforts to combat drought and desertification are scaled up through changing production and consumption patterns and reducing deforestation and forest degradation.

12. Many countries cited the need for more financial resources, transfer of technology and know-how and capacity-building — the means of implementation — as the most crucial crosscutting issue necessary for

sustainable development. They called on the international community to fulfil its commitments in these areas, including the Monterrey commitments. It was pointed out that, according to recent figures, development aid decreased in 2006 and again in 2007.

13. Among the most cited concerns were the food crisis and the food price increases. Many countries mentioned the deleterious effects on poor populations and the risk of a swift reversal of progress in reducing poverty and hunger. The importance of finding long-term solutions to structural problems in food and agriculture was mentioned by many as a core topic for the work of this session. At the same time, some countries thanked the Secretary-General for creating a high-level Task Force to address the food crisis.

14. Many countries emphasized the need for profound changes in the agricultural system. Agricultural productivity has to increase to meet the long-term rising trend in demand for food. Investment in the sector needs to increase. At the same time, agriculture needs to be made more sustainable. Agricultural practices must change towards better land and soil management. Effective means must be found so that science and technology reach small farmers. And, the paramount role of women in agriculture must be better recognized and measures to boost productivity and sustainability need to involve them.

15. Climate change and adaptation to climate change in relation to agriculture were mentioned by many speakers. Climate change is expected to affect water resources and to have a strong impact on drought and desertification. Climate change is for some speakers the most urgent challenge faced by African countries, SIDS and LDCs whose economies are dependent on activities affected by climate. The need to help developing countries devise adaptation strategies through financial assistance, technology transfer and capacity building was highlighted. Many delegations pointed out that the current level of funding in support of adaptation is far below the requirements facing developing countries.

16. Speakers highlighted other cross-cutting issues, such as the need to address unsustainable production and consumption patterns with developed countries taking the lead in accordance with the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities.

17. Many delegations mentioned the challenges faced by those living under foreign occupation; concern was also expressed over the politicization of deliberations at the CSD.

18. Some delegations stressed that this session was a good opportunity to highlight synergies among the Rio conventions and other relevant multilateral environment agreements and the implementation of policies in related areas. In this regard, it was stressed that efforts to achieve such synergies should be done within the legal mandates of the conventions and agreements, while respecting their individual legal status. Others mentioned that, in dealing with the topics on the CSD agenda, caution should be taken not to duplicate the work of existing dedicated organizations such as the UNFCCC and UNCCD.

III. Thematic discussions: agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa

A. Introduction

19. The present summary represents views expressed during the interactive thematic discussions; it does not reflect a consensus. The interactive discussions benefited from national reports submitted by member States, the reports of the Secretary-General, the outcomes of the regional implementation meetings and the presentations and active participation by panellists. Presentations of case studies during the sessions contributed to the interactive dialogue among participants. As a review session, CSD-16 is focusing on identifying constraints and obstacles, as well as sharing of lessons learned and best practices. The review

session provides a forum for sharing real world solutions, learning from each other and adapting solutions that contribute to sustainable livelihoods and poverty eradication.

20. The thematic focus on agriculture during the Commission's 2008-2009 cycle was extremely timely and appropriate, given the current food crisis and the vital role agriculture plays in poverty and hunger reduction and the achievement of overall sustainable development. Participants expressed appreciation that agriculture is back on the agenda of the Commission. At the mid-way point to the 2015 target year to reach the MDGs, CSD-16 was addressing the issue that was most critical for the first goal, to halve global poverty and hunger, as well as contributing directly to the achievement of the other MDGs.

21. Speakers discussed current food crisis and its long term challenges; trends in agricultural production, consumption and prices; the impacts of climate change and high energy prices; and new factors such as demand for biofuels. It was also recognized that the review of agriculture cannot be de-linked from the other components of the thematic cluster of this session, namely rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. The review session needs to take an integrated approach to the consideration of all these issues, within the context of sustainable development.

22. Rural development and agriculture have an important role to play in meeting the MDG on poverty and hunger. More than 70 per cent of the world's poor live in rural areas and the rural poverty rate is more than double the rate of poverty in urban areas. Against the backdrop of the current food crisis, the world may not be able to meet this goal, thus making it more important than ever that poverty eradication be made the central theme of rural development programmes and policies.

23. Land is one of the most important assets for the rural population. It provides a basis for livelihoods, a safety net from absolute poverty, and is a basis for social and economic relations in a society. It also serves as a source of cultural identity. Land provides important ecosystem services and is a crucial factor in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Land tenure security and equitable access to land and natural resources are a central aspect of sustainable development and poverty reduction.

24. Drought threatens the livelihoods of affected rural communities leading to food shortage and food insecurity. Drought contributes to declines in agricultural production, famine, and population movements. The strong linkages between drought, agriculture, rural development and climate change were identified by many speakers. The developing world is particularly vulnerable to drought, especially in those regions that are dependent on climate-sensitive economic sectors.

25. Projected climate change is likely to increase the frequency, severity and duration of drought events in many arid and semi-arid regions, with even greater and sustained negative impacts. The increasing frequency of the El Nino/La Nina phenomenon has led to a new climate pattern called seasonal aridity or periodic drought, in addition to local droughts.

26. Desertification – the most serious form of land degradation - poses a threat to progress in sustainable development, and to the eradication of poverty and hunger. It can set back the efforts of developing countries to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Its adverse impacts affect mostly the poorest of the poor, depriving them of their land, the main source of their livelihood.

27. Desertification is a global problem that requires a global response through concerted efforts among all member States and concerned stakeholders. Therefore, international cooperation, including through global partnerships, technology transfer and enhanced scientific research, is required.

28. Over the last few years, many African countries have registered strong economic growth. Many positive developments have occurred that should not be overlooked or underestimated. Important efforts in poverty reduction, improved access to water, and better governance, for instance, have been undertaken. Access to primary and secondary education has improved markedly, as has been the case with access to health care and provision of treatments for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

29. However, Africa is still lagging behind in its progress towards sustainable development, including in reaching the MDGs. Challenges exist in the areas of agricultural productivity, infrastructure development, industrial competitiveness, management of natural resources, the strengthening – including the financing – of health care systems and sustainable urban development, - in areas such as resource efficiency, sustainable tourism, chemicals and waste management.

30. To achieve sustainable development in the thematic issues, there will need to be an enabling environment at all levels, good governance, and institutional and capacity building. There is a strong need for strengthening science research and education focused on solutions; there should be mechanisms for facilitating dialogue between scientists, decision-makers and farmers, including through improved extension services so that information and solutions get into the hands of farmers, particularly small-scale farmers.

31. There is an urgent need to fully implement Agenda 21 and the Rio Principles and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation as well as the international partnership for development called for in the Millennium Declaration. In this regard, it was noted that commitments from the international community in terms of official development assistance (ODA) have not been fully realized. ODA has actually declined in the last two years. Moreover, a significant portion of that ODA takes the form of emergency aid and debt relief.

32. Many delegations noted external constraints on progress in the thematic areas under review, in particular with respect to the means of implementation.

B. Obstacles and constraints

1. Agriculture

33. Poverty, unsustainable natural resource use and food security are interlinked issues that must be addressed in a coherent, integrated manner

34. Rapidly rising prices of basic foods and growing scarcities of some food staples are developing into a global food crisis. Several factors have contributed to higher prices, including drought in some main producing regions, the reduction in global cereal stocks, the changing structure of demand towards more meat and dairy products, increases of fuel prices, and the growing demand for biofuels.

35. Agricultural productivity remains low in many countries and agriculture is often sidelined even though it should be a crucial sector in national, regional and international efforts to reduce hunger and poverty and improve rural livelihoods. Insufficient investment in the agricultural sector from both public and private sources, domestic and international, has been identified as a long-term constraint to increasing agricultural production.

36. Water scarcity, poor land and water management practices, the loss of arable land through desertification and the increasing salinity of soils, rapidly rising prices of inputs and inadequate economic

policies remain major obstacles to increasing agricultural productivity. A holistic approach to agriculture was urged, with agricultural policies integrated into the national sustainable development agenda.

37. Climate change and climatic variability are affecting agricultural production and land resources negatively in some regions. Sea-level rise and increasing temperatures particularly threaten SIDS. Agriculture, including aquaculture, and fisheries are vulnerable to an increased frequency of natural disasters and impacts of a changing climate on the hydrological cycle.

38. In contributing to food security, agriculture also provides ecosystem services such as soil conservation, climate regulation, water and biodiversity conservation. Sustaining productivity improvements while maintaining ecosystem services will depend on arable land's being cultivated in a sustainable manner.

39. Many delegates highlighted the difficulties facing subsistence farmers in accessing farm inputs and markets. The particular risks facing small farmers of market fluctuations were also noted.

40. Despite agriculture being so important for the Africa region, access to food in the region continues to be limited. Subsistence farming, lack of access to chemical inputs, credit and extension services, and climate variability severely limit the capacities of small farmers to enhance agricultural productivity. Many speakers renewed the call for a "Green Revolution for Africa" to boost agricultural production, increase economic growth and achieve food security in the region.

41. Delegations stressed the importance of an open and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system and called for a successful and timely conclusion of the Doha development round of trade negotiations. Many delegations emphasized the importance of the development dimension in the Doha work programme and highlighted that the stalled negotiations in the Doha round were an impediment to agriculture production.

2. Rural development

42. Constraints to rural development are wide-ranging and vary in nature. These include: deficient rural development policies; lack of participation in decision-making of key stakeholders such as women; limited education and inadequate information for rural farmers to improve agricultural production techniques or to diversify their income through non-farming activities. Insufficient resource availability to finance integrated rural development programmes has further impeded progress in implementation.

43. Investment trends in rural development are not favourable to meeting the current challenges, although many governments have made efforts through national policies and programmes to reverse this trend. The share of ODA allocated to agriculture has gradually declined since the 1980s.

44. Lack of access to farming technologies, especially by small farmers, has also been an impediment to increasing agricultural productivity. Furthermore, small farmers have limited access to local markets and are more vulnerable to natural disasters and economic downturns. Constraints to pastoralists' livelihoods include restricted access to key resources of pasture, water and through-passage, thus increasing their vulnerability to herd loss due to drought.

45. Lack of rural infrastructure and lack of access to infrastructure severely limit the flow of goods and services to the rural poor. Improving access to infrastructure, including transport and information and communication technologies, as well as improving access to energy, water and sanitation, and health care,

and better opportunities for education and training for youth, particularly for girls and women, are most needed in the rural areas.

3. Land

46. Pressure on scarce land resources is rising due to population growth, the increasing need for food, energy, water and raw material as well as expanding urban areas. These pressures combined with climate change patterns are causing land degradation, including in the form of desertification. Other factors contributing to land degradation include loss of arable land due to urbanization, erosion or mechanisms that make the soil sterile. This has negative effects on livelihoods, food production and environmental services derived from land. Soil is decreasing worldwide and there is no way of compensating for the loss of this resource. Many speakers stressed the need for reversing this trend.

47. Many developing countries have limited access to information technology and systems that can contribute to improved land management, planning and productivity. The problem of land use planning and management is further compounded by a lack of current data to assess the extent of land degradation and assess the quality of soils. Also, sustainable utilization of land, particularly in developing countries, is severely constrained by limited technical capacities.

48. The lack of access to land and the lack of transparent land policies prohibit access to other productive resources, thus not allowing poor people to get out of the poverty trap. Limited financial, human, technical and institutional capacities are often cited as important constraints to providing secure land rights and advancing land reform.

49. Insecurity about land tenure also serves as a serious obstacle for small-scale land users to invest in their land, thereby limiting their possibilities to contribute to economic growth, sound land management practices and social inclusion. Poor and marginal groups, in particular indigenous peoples and women, often lack secure land rights with negative implications for poverty reduction. In many countries the lack of empowerment of women also presents an obstacle to realizing the full potential of land resources. The important role women play in land management and food production is in many countries not reflected in land titles, posing obstacles for women to keep their land and gain access to other productive resources.

50. Climate change will impact the availability of land and water and compound vulnerability, with consequences being particularly severe in SIDS. At the same time, with sound land management practices, land can provide a sink for greenhouse gases and mitigate climate change, as well as limit the negative consequences of land degradation. More balanced approaches to land management will help to resolve conflicting objectives.

4. Drought

51. Drought-affected communities often lack both the financial and technical resources and support in capacity-building needed for effective drought management, which has serious impacts on the level of resilience of these communities to drought.

52. Weak legislative frameworks to promote sustainable agricultural practices and lack of institutional capacity for implementation further weaken the capacity of local communities to deal with the impacts of drought.

53. Limited progress in mobilizing long-term investments and stakeholder participation continues to constrain effective drought mitigation and adaptation in many affected developing countries and regions.

In this regard, many speakers noted the need for scaling up financial and technical assistance by development partners.

54. Lack of reliable and timely forecasts and information available to local communities and lack of drought-monitoring systems and early warning capacities in affected developing countries and regions, particularly in Africa, seriously constrain their ability to undertake informed drought impact assessments. Difficulties are often encountered in data gathering and management at the relevant spatial scale as well as in information-sharing at the national level.

55. Drought leads to environmental degradation with a vicious cycle of soil exposure, erosion, land degradation and desertification as well as increased risk of wildfires with consequent effects on atmospheric pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and loss of CO₂ sinks.

56. Drought management tends to be fragmented with limited cooperation at local, regional and international levels on drought planning and management.

5. Desertification

57. Extreme and widespread rural poverty continues to be a main barrier to combating desertification. Africa and several other regions are facing challenges and constraints as a result of desertification. Unsustainable land use practices in the agricultural and pastoral sectors continue to lower the resilience of dry-land ecosystems rendering them increasingly vulnerable to land degradation and desertification.

58. Weak institutional and legal structures, poor coordination of collaboration among stakeholders across economic sectors, in particular from the agricultural, natural resources management, and land sectors, as well as lack of financial resources and technical capacities, continue to hamper the implementation of focused and effective interventions to combat desertification. The lack of a global monitoring and assessment results in fragmented information available for combating desertification.

59. Lack of incentives to promote the sustainable use and management of rangelands, including the promotion of secure livelihoods in the pastoral livestock sector, and lack of research programmes in effective stock breeding and management of pasture lands were also identified as constraints.

60. Inefficient water use in irrigated agriculture has added to the depletion of freshwater bodies and groundwater resources in many dry-lands. As water tables fall, salinity increases and water quality declines, with associated negative impacts on human and animal health, soil productivity and biodiversity.

61. The slow process of transfer, acquisition and adaptation of appropriate and affordable technologies, including water and soil conservation technologies, technologies to grow climate-resilient and less water-intensive crops, and technologies that improve land productivity and increase agricultural production, continues to create difficulties for affected developing countries to address the adverse impacts of land degradation, desertification and drought.

62. Efforts to attract private sector investments in sectors relevant to desertification and drought often failed due to lack of financial incentives that could help to secure profitable investment returns. Poverty and inadequate access to affordable credit facilities prevented local people from acquiring funding that they could profitably invest in measures to prevent land degradation and sustain their livelihoods.

63. Conflicts, wars and restricted access and use of land and other natural resources continue to aggravate the impacts of land degradation and desertification on the livelihoods and ecosystems in some countries and regions.

64. Inadequate scientific research, education, data collection and monitoring as well as capacity building poses constraints in developing countries since building resilience requires in-depth knowledge of local area ecosystems, weather patterns, land use and demographic patterns.

65. Limited participation by local communities, indigenous peoples and other civil society groups in decision-making on policies to combat desertification hinders their effectiveness.

6. Africa

66. African economies depend heavily on exporting primary commodities, which contribute 80 per cent or more to total export earnings for half of African countries. Science and technology adoption is low, as are foreign direct investment inflows. The combination of inadequate and underdeveloped physical infrastructure, especially transport and irrigation infrastructure, and land degradation, desertification and climate change is a major barrier to reducing poverty, improving health and achieving food security.

67. The onset of the food crisis is threatening gains made in achieving the MDGs in Africa, as it reduces the affordability of food for the poor and leads to diversion of budgetary resources from other priority needs. Urgent measures are needed to keep food affordable to the poor and to enable farmers faced with high inputs costs to plant their crops for the next growing season.

68. African staple crop yields are a mere fraction (roughly a fourth) of the world average. Long-term investments are needed to boost agricultural productivity. In many areas, soil nutrients are severely depleted, and fertilizer use remains very low. For poor farmers, fertilizers have become even less affordable with high oil prices. Hence there is the need to underline the importance of improved efficiency in fertilizer use and the use of other methods of enriching soil fertility, even as efforts are made to make fertilizers more accessible and affordable.

69. Improvements to farm-level productivity need to be accompanied by strengthening of other links of the agricultural supply (or value) chain, including efforts to ensure that farmers can market their surpluses at an attractive price. Regional trade integration can help, by permitting production of farm inputs at economic scale for regional markets. But intra-African trade continues to be hampered by trade barriers and poor cross-border infrastructure. Value chain actors are only weakly linked, and access of farmers to market information is limited. Farmers, especially women farmers, often lack secure land rights and access to credit.

70. Productivity and competitiveness of most industrial sectors is low, inhibiting the potential of Africa to move into higher value-added activities beyond bulk commodities. Low levels of private sector investment, weak domestic financial markets, lack of technological capacities and limited transfer of technologies are among the obstacles to economic diversification and industrial upgrading.

71. Poor health is one of the most common reasons for households to fall into poverty, or to get stuck there. Lack of access to affordable private health insurance or public health care is a major constraint to sustainable development in Africa. Low income, high pharmaceutical costs compared, for example, with South Asia, lack of data with which to develop insurance products and underdeveloped financial markets are among the constraints to the establishment of an affordable health care system in Africa.

72. Africa still faces constraints from the global trade system. The existing trade system may restrict African agricultural products' access to markets. Regional integration in Africa needs to be further strengthened. Besides reducing costs and expanding markets, regional integration may help African countries cope better with climate change. The Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union and NEPAD can play an important role in this regard.

73. Inadequate access to energy in Africa poses serious constraints to achieving sustainable development goals including poverty eradication.

C. Lessons learned and best practices

1. Agriculture

74. With the expected increase in frequency of natural disasters, in particular droughts and floods, there is a need for increasing resilience and implementing coping mechanisms in order to adapt to climate change. In this regard, agricultural insurance schemes have proven successful in some countries in providing necessary risk coverage.

75. With sustainable land management practices, agriculture can contribute towards mitigating climate change by providing a sink for greenhouse gases and reducing the greenhouse gas emissions of agricultural production. Sustainable agricultural, forestry and natural resources management practices can increase productivity of scarce land resources and help protect watersheds.

76. Governments and major groups working in partnership have shown promising results in achieving sustainable management of natural resources. Rural cooperatives have proven effective in aiding farmers in securing credit, increasing productivity and expanding access to markets.

77. Efficient water resources development and management as well as reusing safe wastewater can be a key factor in increasing resilience to climatic changes and ensuring food security. Also, improved irrigation efficiencies and on-farm management practices could contribute towards overcoming water shortages and enhancing food security.

78. Information and communication technologies have proven to be useful tools for rural entrepreneurs and small-scale farmers. Such technologies facilitate access to market information and can enable farmers to obtain advice and training from e-extension services. Use of appropriate ICT in rural areas can also improve access to rural financial services, including credit, savings, payments and remittance receipts.

79. The use of food crops for producing biofuels has been a source of concern for many countries. However, biofuels can help overcome fossil fuel dependency and provide employment opportunities if their production meets sustainability criteria.

80. Many speakers presented their national or regional experiences in addressing the various challenges facing their agricultural sectors. The experiences gained from the development and implementation of national food security strategies, as called for in the JPOI, and other regional plans of action, were highlighted by the African Group.

2. Rural Development

81. Among the activities that have assisted rural populations in improving their livelihoods are: organizing farming cooperatives to ensure that services are provided in rural areas; extending training

programmes to rural youth which expand their learning capabilities and encourage them to invest in their own communities; developing agricultural micro-businesses; strengthening national institutions to eradicate rural poverty; and investing in infrastructure such as hospitals, roads and schools in rural areas.

82. Supporting small- and medium-sized agro-industry enterprises in rural areas, backed by local and traditional knowledge and combined with the latest science and technology, can contribute to rural employment and diversification of rural economies.

83. The rural development challenges can only be overcome by adopting holistic and integrated approaches. However, these approaches will have to be developed within the context of local specificities. Adopting decentralization policies has facilitated service provision to rural populations in some areas. Availability of energy and water services has been a source of growth in entrepreneurial activities.

84. Many rural communities have benefited from the national funds established to support rural development programmes. Improving agricultural productivity and enhancing access to physical and social infrastructure and services have proven to be important elements of successful rural development strategies. Tourism was noted to be one of the key non-farming activities having the potential of lifting the rural poor out of poverty.

3. Land

85. Integrated management of land and water resources taking into consideration all uses can increase land productivity, enhance resilience of farming systems and augment availability of water resources. Such an integrated approach depends on good governance, a transparent land policy and the effective participation of stakeholders at all levels. Traditional knowledge can inform new approaches and technologies for sustainable land management. Agricultural techniques such as conservation agriculture and zero tillage have proven to be successful in many cases.

86. The scarcity of land resources has led some countries to devise policies to allocate land resources according to their greatest productive use and avoid the loss of agriculturally productive areas. The study of macro scale effects can help design a balanced use of land, which avoids the competition of biofuel with food production and forested areas.

87. Secure access to land rights for communities or individuals, particularly marginalized groups, indigenous peoples and women, along with a transparent land administration system to control and manage land has proven to be instrumental in supporting sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction.

88. Tenure arrangements based on the principles of good governance and property rights are central for the sustainable management of natural resources, ensuring food security and welfare and reducing conflicts and poverty. Incentives to foster the sustainable management of land resources, such as payment for ecosystem services have been successful in some countries. Land reforms, which take into account cultural and customary rights, have greater potential for success.

89. Relocating traditional land owners for new commercial interests can have serious negative consequences for food security, economic and social development. Social Impact Assessment can help in avoiding the relocation of land owners and finding alternatives.

90. Implementing ILO labour standards can strengthen the rights of the agricultural workers.

91. Strategic Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment are useful instruments for sustainable land use planning that can be utilized to identify potential environmental impacts. Such tools have proven useful in avoiding negative impacts and identifying suitable mitigation options. A dialogue between land planners and climate change experts may be useful in addressing the complex relations of these issues.

92. Decentralization of land administration to the local level may help in promoting good governance and management of natural resources, and transparent administration may also reduce corruption.

4. Drought

93. Employing a proactive approach to drought management has proven to be effective in reducing the risks and mitigating the effects of drought. Taking a proactive approach is even more urgent under the current projections for climate change.

94. Drought is strongly linked with agriculture and land management. Strategies for drought management should incorporate issues of sustainable agriculture, soil conservation, crop diversification and integrated water management. The potential of soil protection as a means for climate change mitigation and adaptation should be further explored. Capacity-building and training are needed to fully implement such strategies.

95. Resilience-building is an important element of drought management. Evidence suggests that communities with well-established infrastructures and developed capacities for drought management were able to survive drought events without suffering widespread famine or economic collapse.

96. As droughts pose significant threats to crop production, the development and introduction of drought-tolerant crop varieties has become an important element of crop management under drought conditions. Further research on drought-tolerant varieties should be strongly encouraged.

97. Conservation and management of water resources in the water-stressed dry-lands is of utmost importance. Water recycling and reclamation can be an effective way of coping with the chronic water scarcity in dry areas. Attention should be paid to education and awareness-raising to change the perception of the public towards the consumption of reclaimed or recycled water. Special attention should be paid to the sustainable use of deep groundwater resources. There is also scope for increasing the efficiency in rainwater harvesting and in irrigated agriculture.

98. Improved access to appropriate and affordable agricultural technologies and corresponding field training are important to increase food production and grow drought-tolerant crops, while maintaining soil productivity.

99. Drought has also become an important risk factor that affects investment decisions of agricultural producers and financial institutions working with farmers. Index-based weather insurance represents an emerging innovative market scheme for managing risks associated with drought.

100. The importance of an integrated approach to providing reliable and timely climate information and weather forecasts was widely recognized. Evidence suggests that the economic, social, and environmental damages associated with drought events can be reduced if climate information and weather forecasts are taken into account in drought adaptation and mitigation.

101. Increased investments in measures related to early warning, including for the establishment of early warning systems, will be crucial. Such investments will make it possible to improve drought forecasting so as to better support local communities in coping with drought events. In this regard, the importance of access of rural communities to early warning systems was highlighted.

102. Many speakers highlighted the value of traditional knowledge in drought adaptation and drought mitigation. For example, indigenous peoples' time-tested drought-combating strategies were recognized as a sound drought adaptation method. Other examples included traditional methods of water management and conservation, and rainwater catchments and storage.

5. Desertification

103. The integration of the national action programmes to combat desertification into national development frameworks, when supported by strong institutional capacities, can lead to their effective implementation. Incorporating the priorities identified in the strategies and programmes into the national budget helps mobilize required financial resources and their alignment with identified priorities. Decentralization of actions to the local level, empowerment of local stakeholders, in particular women, and partnerships, including public-private partnerships, can contribute to progress in implementation. Regional co-operation should also be encouraged.

104. Experience suggests that communal land ownership systems often do not encourage farmers to invest in sustainable land management practices. On the other hand, the allocation of land to individual farmers has been an incentive to farmers to invest in agriculture and soil conservation, which increases both agricultural production and the value of the land.

105. Some speakers highlighted good practices in providing loans for sustainable management of pasture lands and better management of water resources as well as in making available targeted subsidies and insurance during times of droughts.

106. Community-based natural resources management, including on-farm and community forestry and soil and water conservation has proved beneficial for farmers.

107. Building on the traditional knowledge that local communities and indigenous peoples have developed in their interaction with nature over time has proven to be an effective way of self-help in addressing desertification and drought, for example, in rainwater harvesting, including through the use of underground reservoirs or cisterns in arid areas, and biodiversity conservation. Promoting this kind of knowledge should also ensure that local communities and indigenous peoples can benefit directly from its commercial use.

108. Increased interaction among scientists, policy makers and local communities can accelerate the dissemination and adaptation of new and emerging technologies and corresponding knowledge from laboratories to field application in developing countries, with assistance from development partners

109. The establishment of indicators facilitates regular evaluation of improvements in land use management and the impacts of these improvements on agriculture and ecosystems.

6. Africa

110. African institutions are strongly committed to the eradication of poverty. The African Union has adopted this as a core mandate. Many countries have adopted national strategies to reduce poverty

policies promoting good governance. NEPAD provides a consistent and concrete framework for achieving sustainable development in Africa, reflecting African priorities. NEPAD provides capacity building, reinforces regional and sub-regional cooperation, promotes better regional governance, and supports the implementation of the African environment initiative. Partnerships with other countries and regions have resulted in increased cooperation on sustainable development issues, including the MDGs.

111. African countries share many common sustainable development challenges, whether north or south of the Sahara. These include water scarcity, land degradation, drought, and desertification. There is thus scope for experience sharing and co-operation across the continent.

112. In the specific field of agriculture, African governments have committed to significant objectives, notably in NEPAD's Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). These include the objective to devote at least 10% of national budgets to agriculture and rural development as stated in the Maputo summit declaration, as well as the Abuja declaration.

113. Energy is key to industrial development, including rural agro-processing and other industries. Many African countries have been addressing this issue and have started ambitious programmes to address their power deficits. A number of partnerships have contributed to these efforts. User-owned electricity cooperatives have proven to be an effective model in some countries to extend electricity access to rural areas.

114. A number of positive experiences have occurred in the fields of agriculture and the fight against desertification. Within the framework of NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and in furtherance of commitments made in the Maputo Declaration, African governments are increasing their funding for agriculture and designing, together with development partners and regional economic communities, comprehensive agricultural development programmes at the country and regional levels based on the latest scientific evidence. An integrated and comprehensive approach to investments in agriculture, including improved policy, technology and links to markets, can increase productivity and trade, with a direct impact on rural incomes, and on reduction in hunger and poverty. CAADP provides a comprehensive framework.

115. Pilot projects, training and capacity building have been implemented in various countries, focusing for example on extension services, input supply, credit and other support to small-scale farmers, and sustainable farming techniques such as drip irrigation or natural methods aimed at limiting the use of insecticides and fertilizers. Public agricultural research institutions have helped in developing improved varieties, in standardization and in promoting new end uses and markets for African staple crops. Pilot programmes have also included insurance schemes for farmers, livestock herders and other actors in the agricultural value chain. Interest in such schemes is growing as one possible way to protect farmers and herders from the effects of climate change.

116. The experience of one country with rapidly boosting its agricultural sector suggests the effectiveness of targeted and timely government supply of affordable inputs to small farmers, working through private sector agro-dealers to distribute the inputs. Government support to smallholder adoption of high-yielding varieties of staple and cash crops has also met with some success.

117. Some African countries have had positive experience with reversing land degradation, for example, through reforestation on fallow land. This is a relatively low-cost method of regeneration of depleted soils. With government and donor support, locally managed enterprises can strengthen local forest product value chains and generate valuable revenue for the community.

118. Tourism has the potential to become an important economic sector in Africa. Sustainable tourism, including community-based and eco-tourism, can be an important complement to sustainable management of natural resources. Experience in West and Southern Africa shows how countries can cooperate in joint management of parks and other valuable ecosystems that traverse national boundaries. Communal land conservancies have proven to be an effective approach to wildlife-based tourism in southern Africa. The World Tourism Organization can play an important role in providing technical assistance in the area of sustainable tourism.

119. Interesting experience relevant for Africa can be drawn from other developing countries. Models of village knowledge networks could be relevant for Africa in developing new platforms for extension services, research, and farmer linkages. Small island developing States of the Pacific would be eager to share knowledge on water harvesting and would be keen to open a dialogue with African countries.

120. Important progress has been made in infrastructure building, in part thanks to South-South and North-South cooperation. The multiplication of exchanges among both African countries and with Asian and Latin American countries, as well as with development partners, contributes to the dissemination of best practices and usage of new technology.

D. Means of implementation

121. Investments in research and development particularly in innovative and sustainable agricultural technologies and infrastructure are urgently required. In this regard, measures to enhance the dissemination and transfer of new and innovative agricultural technologies to developing countries are necessary. The international community should step up support to investments in agriculture and substantially increase official development assistance in support of international research and on-the-ground outreach, training and extension services in agriculture, including those by the CGIAR system.

122. Successful and timely conclusion of the Doha Development Round of international trade negotiations will help address many of the challenges being faced by the agriculture sector, bringing concrete benefits to farmers in developing countries.

123. The important role of stakeholders, especially farmers and agricultural workers, in achieving agricultural development was highlighted. Agricultural workers are seen to be underpaid and undervalued. Addressing the special needs of women farmers is essential.

124. Appropriate and environmentally-sound production and distribution of seeds are essential for sustainable agriculture. Greater use of organic farming and traditional food crops was encouraged.

125. Development and use of genetically-modified seeds that are pest-, disease- and drought-resistant need to be explored, based on proper research while fully taking into account their still-unknown effects.

126. Providing information and advice to small-scale farmers about sustainable farming practices can help them to increase agricultural production and get out of the poverty trap. Similarly, technical support to small enterprises could help them remain competitive.

127. Investing in rural infrastructure and social services was viewed as an effective way to eradicate poverty. Also, creating economic opportunities through modern technologies and small-scale industrial development was noted as important for generating non-farm employment in rural areas.

128. There is a need for adequate investment in sustainable land management and tenure security. More resources need to be made available to enable national and local governments to advance land reform and secure land access. Increased allocation of financial resources to land management projects will also help in improving land management and land productivity.

129. Systems and technologies that increase land productivity and address challenges in land titling have been developed by developing and developed countries and can be shared as South-South and North-South cooperation.

130. Good governance, transparency and capacity building were seen as prerequisites for strengthening the institutional and legal framework for the administration of land. Strengthening capacities in administrative procedures and development of information systems is needed to establish a system of secure land rights taking into account specific national circumstances.

131. Scaling up the allocation of financial resources to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) focal area on land degradation, primarily desertification and deforestation, in the next replenishment cycle, should unlock new and additional funding from the GEF. Some countries mentioned that the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD be reviewed and reformed in a direction that allows it to play a complementary role to the GEF in providing and mobilizing resources for the elaboration and implementation of action programmes.

132. Access to space technologies and their applications, including systems of earth observation, meteorological satellites and communications as well as satellite navigation systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the environment, allows for better monitoring and mapping of desertification processes and drought events. Capacity-building in the utilization of space technologies and their application improves the knowledge base on drought management, climate change adaptation, and crop forecasting, including the prediction of harvest schedules.

133. A variety of estimates have been made of Africa's investment needs in coming years. By one estimate, roughly \$6 billion a year would be needed for construction of rural infrastructure. The EU has announced that by 2010 it expects that half of its ODA would be destined for Africa, which would translate (at current exchange rate) into an additional \$10 billion a year.

134. There is a need for a reinforced development partnership with Africa, beginning with honouring of international commitments on ODA. New and additional resources need to be channelled to the continent. Existing initiatives need to be strengthened, such as the new Asia-Africa Partnership.

135. While there has been significant debt relief in recent years, a further extension of such relief could have significant economic and social benefits. Foreign direct investment also needs to be increased. Access to capital by small- and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs through innovative business loans and micro-credit financing should be strengthened.

136. Capacity building, transfer of technologies in accordance with the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building, technical cooperation and partnership are needed. There is a particular need for support in capacity-building for local communities and indigenous peoples.

137. Increased ODA and public investment in infrastructure, notably in rural areas, will be critical to boost African farmers' incomes and agricultural value added. Increased investment in R&D, development of local seed companies and support for extension services in African countries will also be needed. Capacity building is needed to support the NEPAD strategy on industrial development. Greater efforts are

needed to attract investment into the processing of Africa's natural resources, including agro-processing, and the local or regional production of agricultural inputs.

138. Many delegations stressed the importance of strengthening trade capacity, increasing productive capacity and enhancing competitiveness if Africa is to benefit fully from international trade. Priority attention needs to be given to strengthening trade capacity, including through delivery of effective aid-for-trade.

E. Inter-linkages and all cross-cutting issues

139. No single thematic issue can be addressed in isolation. There are significant inter-linkages among the thematic issues of agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. Addressing the inter-locking relationships among the thematic issues and cross-cutting issues through an integrated approach, including through promoting partnerships at all levels and through bringing together multiple stakeholders, is essential to long-term progress in implementation.

140. It is recognized that there remain inequalities in consumption patterns within and between countries. Pursuing sustainable patterns of consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, is essential to progress in this important area.

141. Gender has been a prominent cross-cutting issue for the current CSD cycle. Gender inequality has been proven to constitute a constraint to growth and poverty reduction. Women working in the agricultural sector in particular tend to be "invisible workers", and most of the income from agricultural activities goes to men. Women farmers lack training, access to credit, access to markets and market chains. Empowering women should be given priority attention by governments.

142. Youth, particularly in rural areas, need alternative livelihood opportunities and must be empowered to contribute to sustainable development.

143. National sustainable development strategies have proven successful in many developed and developing countries. They enhance the consistency of comprehensive and sector plans and facilitate the integration of cross-cutting issues into sector strategies. In some developing countries the implementation of national plans and efforts have resulted in significant progress towards sustainable development, greater economic resilience, lower energy intensities and lower energy costs per unit of production or consumption, with corresponding environmental and social benefits.

144. A number of countries have established NSDS review and shared learning mechanisms, which offer a promising way to further advance the implementation of NSDS and the fulfilment of the JPOI commitments.

145. Public-private partnerships, including the World Summit on Sustainable Development partnerships, have proven important in enhancing sustainable development, including through promoting multi-stakeholder involvement, resource mobilization and facilitation of technology transfer and diffusion. The private sector can play an important role in increasing agricultural production and promoting rural development.

146. Enhancement of capacity building is of paramount importance, particularly in rural and remote areas. Lack of knowledge, appropriate legislation and institutional infrastructure, and weakness in education systems and human resources development continue to affect adversely the ongoing efforts for

promoting agricultural productivity, rural development and for combating desertification and land degradation.

147. Scientific solutions are critical to increasing agricultural productivity. Investment in science and technology, training, capacity building and information-sharing are important for addressing long-term constraints. Science and technology in other domains, including application of space technologies, can play an important role, for example for monitoring land use changes. Support by the international community in these areas is encouraged.

F. Continuing challenges

148. With over 850 million people already suffering from chronic hunger, the current escalation in food prices is already causing millions more of the poor to go hungry. Food aid needs are critical, while the costs of supplying it are also rising. Meeting this challenge will require both short and long term actions. Meeting the additional food aid requirements through mobilization of additional funds from the international community is an immediate priority.

149. Mobilizing long-term investments in infrastructure, through both domestic resources and official development assistance, providing incentives to private sector to invest in agriculture and livestock production, and building the capacities of land users, in particular local communities, women and youth, remains a continuing task.

150. New strategic partnerships need to be created in the agricultural sector. Investments in agricultural R&D need to increase. The international community should support technology transfer and capacity building in the agricultural sector. New platforms for extension services, research, and farmer linkages are needed. Investments in ICTs in rural areas will be critical to increase farmers' access to market and technical information. In that respect, implementation of recommendations from the World Summit on Information Society would achieve much.

151. There is thus an urgent and continuing need to diversify the rural economy with the objective to provide additional opportunities for rural labour force and to reduce the disparities in the quality of life and in access to services between urban and rural areas. In this context, the rural development programs must aim at creating new jobs and income opportunities outside the agricultural sector. Activities such as environmentally-sound small-scale mining and forest conservation and management offer the potential for diversifying rural economy. However, each opportunity for rural development needs to be tailored to the particular rural setting.

152. Rural economies, including agriculture, largely depend upon natural resources which in many cases are over-exploited. In this regard, unsustainable use of land and water resources poses a serious threat to the sustainability of rural economies, especially in agro-based rural economies. Increasing levels of land degradation and desertification further limit the possibility of meeting the food security objective. Thus, feeding the growing population will continue to be a major challenge.

153. Improving and sustaining the livelihoods of vulnerable groups such as women, children, seniors, nomadic pastoralists, indigenous peoples, disabled people and people living in very remote areas who are constantly threatened by land degradation, water scarcity and climate change remains a great challenge ahead. Meeting this challenge calls for targeted support measures and women can play an important role in implementing these measures as agents of change.

154. In a context of increased global competition for land, the poorest sections of society, often including landless people, women, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, tenant farmers and farm labourers, are least able to compete for land. Many such land users live on common property lands, and do not have clear tenure rights, leaving them particularly vulnerable to dispossession.

155. Unsustainable land use practices present a serious threat to sustainable development. In this regard, the uncontrolled expansion of human settlements poses not only a challenge for sustainable land use planning and management, but may lead to reduced food production in some countries.

156. Many delegations stressed the important role of the UNCCD in combating land degradation and desertification and in mitigating the effects of drought. They highlighted the need for its full implementation. The UNCCD, as the only legally binding, universal agreement on land issues that systematically addresses land degradation and desertification, offers a platform for adaptation, mitigation and resilience and can therefore reinforce the measures intended to address the adverse impacts of climate change and the loss of biodiversity. Synergies among the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UNCCD should be promoted, while respecting the individual mandates of each as separate legal entities.

157. The provision of funds to the UNCCD, which is the most under-funded among the Rio conventions, remains of great concern. The recently adopted 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the UNCCD (2008-2018) has opened a way for renewed commitment to, and effective implementation of, the UNCCD at all levels.

158. There is scope for improving agricultural production while maintaining soil productivity, including through better efficiency in irrigation, rainwater-harvesting and further research on, and the introduction of, drought-tolerant crops and seeds. Aligning grazing strategies with the carrying capacity of pastures can yield effective results with regard to the rehabilitation of degraded grasslands.

159. The identification of hot spots, including the starting points of sand storms, and the establishment of systems to warn people about the sand dune movement and dust storms remain vital in desert areas.

160. Projected climate change is likely to exacerbate water shortage and water quality problems in many water-stressed regions. As pressure on water supplies continues to increase, more frequent and severe droughts are a matter of concern in both water-short and water-surplus regions. This calls for a comprehensive response with respect to climate change mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer and finance.

161. Increased attention and resources must be given to drought monitoring and early warning, including the establishment of systems and networks. There is a particular need for improved access of developing countries to accurate and updated climate and meteorological information.

162. The knowledge base to combat and control desertification and manage drought needs to be strengthened, including through support to scientific research, data collection and monitoring initiatives with the aim to develop a globally shared and affordable monitoring and reporting system.

163. Achieving gender equality is important to accelerate sustainable development. Among the possible actions for implementation are: mobilizing professional women in agriculture, including through affirmative action aimed at including women in training programmes; ensuring that resource flows benefit African women; building capacity in relevant institutions dealing with agriculture to ensure gender

sensitivity; providing incentives to small scale women farmers to accelerate transition to more sustainable practices; and training women for maintenance of agricultural equipment.

164. Resources available for post-conflict reconstruction are insufficient and unpredictable. A more adequate framework to accompany reconstruction in post-conflict countries and increased ODA is needed.

165. The international community should scale up support for the implementation of various programmes under NEPAD.

166. Regional trade in Africa needs to be strengthened. Stronger regional trade and broader economic integration would benefit not only agriculture but also sectors producing agricultural inputs and other agricultural goods. However, it is difficult to embark on regional integration without a regional transport infrastructure.

167. Further efforts to extend and improve the quality of education in Africa are important, as are efforts to strengthen health care systems, including health financing and insurance. The large and growing numbers of AIDS orphans in some countries make the challenge of providing adequate education and health care for children and youth all the more challenging.

168. As national sustainable development strategies are processes that cut across all levels (local, national, regional and international) and across sectors and involve multiple actors from all major stakeholders, countries continue to face challenges in implementing NSDS. Increased exchange of learning experiences and increased capacity-building support are essential to address these challenges.

169. Promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns needs to be given a higher priority, in particular in developed countries. Policies and programmes for advancing sustainable production and consumption will need to be placed in the context of sustainable development.

170. Implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples would further efforts to achieve sustainable development goals.

171. There is scope for the United Nations development system to work together to address the continuing challenges in the thematic cluster of issues.

IV. Regional discussions

172. Five regional discussions were organized to provide opportunity for presentations of the outcomes of the regional implementation meetings, followed by interactive dialogue between delegates and regional panellists, including prominent government and non-government experts, representatives of regional commissions and other regional partners, focused on identifying region-specific barriers and constraints, lessons learned and best practices in relation to the thematic cluster of issues under review.

Africa

173. Participants in the discussion emphasized that accelerating progress in the implementation of the CSD-16/17 thematic cluster is critical for sustainable development in Africa. The interlinked and interrelated nature of the thematic issues, including linkages with climate change and food security was also noted. It was stressed that Africa was the continent with the largest percentage of people living in poverty and vulnerable to climate change, and that improving agricultural productivity and strengthening rural development were key to overcoming poverty in Africa.

174. The multi-faceted nature of the challenges in the African region meant that some problems could be addressed at a national level, while others required regional initiatives. Participants gave examples of national and regional initiatives being undertaken to overcome barriers and constraints in relation to the themes under review during the current thematic cycle. A number of delegations underlined the importance of NEPAD and called for increased support for its programmes and activities. The important role of regional communities was recognized and the need to strengthen donor support for regional institutions was emphasized.

175. Participants underlined that land tenure and land ownership, including by women, remained among the key issues for African countries. It was also stated that sustainable urbanization was dependent on sustainable rural development.

176. Delegations underscored the need to invest in agriculture and rural development, including fulfilment of commitments made under regional plans and strategies. The need for subsidies was also noted. Delegations also called on donors to fulfil their commitments, in accordance with the Monterrey Consensus.

177. The need to maximize agricultural productivity, as well as the need to reinforce extension services and access to technology, was recognized. Poor infrastructure in Africa was noted as barrier hindering access to markets, depriving farmers of adequate incentives to increase food production in response to rising prices. In the global context, there was also a call for a speedy conclusion to the Doha Round of trade negotiations.

178. Several participants stressed that Africa's dry lands offered opportunities for reclaiming potentially valuable resources at relatively low investment costs, contributing in the process to climate change adaptation and mitigation objectives. The role of sustainable tourism was also noted.

179. Attention was drawn to the importance of South-South and tri-partite cooperation in relation to agriculture and food security. Some delegations called to strengthen the R&D capacities for agriculture in the African region. Others noted the need for capacity building, particularly with respect to land, as well as the need for technology transfer, and debt relief for African countries.

ESCWA Region

180. The thematic issues under review posed particular challenges in the region. Scarce water resources were identified by participants as one of the main factors limiting agricultural and rural development. The region was experiencing rapid population growth and poverty levels varied widely from country to country. It was noted that desertification and land degradation remained a problem; however countries in the region were taking action with respect to soil improvement, conservation and improved irrigation practices. As droughts have occurred with greater frequency, countries have responded with a range of measures, but obstacles remain in implementing an approach based on managing risks.

181. It was noted that escalating food prices were taking a toll on the poor in the region. Food insecurity was not merely an agricultural issue, but needed to be addressed in the context of the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development. A number of delegations noted the need to have political stability in fully implementing sustainable development in the region.

182. Delegations underscored that both man-made and natural processes of desertification needed to be addressed. In order to combat drought, action was being taken at the regional level to improve early

warning and drought forecasting, as well as observation and data collection. Countries in the region are taking action to address the urban overlap with agricultural land, as well introducing participatory approaches in land planning and management.

183. Participants noted that agriculture in the region faces some challenges such as lack of access to irrigation, poor agricultural practices, and salination of land. Lack of access to technology remained a major barrier, but technology transfer had to be matched with the know-how and skills enabling its efficient use. It was emphasized that the region could benefit from the shift to less water-intensive crops. The improvement of agricultural productivity, health and educational services were noted as important to achieving sustainable development in the region.

184. Delegations noted that agricultural producers in the region faced difficulties in securing access to markets. Non-tariff barriers to trade, in particular environmental and food safety standards, are being addressed through regional programmes directed at small producers. In response to this, countries in the region were taking action to support agriculture and trade in the region.

185. Participants discussed the potential and the costs of desalination plants for water supply. It was noted that although desalination had traditionally been a costly option, recent advances in technology meant that it had become more affordable. Although desalination was at present being used for potable water only, there were plans to treat saline water in rural areas for agricultural use.

Asia and the Pacific

186. Participants stressed the economic diversity and dynamism of the region with biggest population in the world in which some of the richest and the poorest countries, as well as the biggest importers and exporters of agricultural products are located. The unique nature of the region contributes to the potential and strengthening of intra-regional cooperation. It was noted that countries of the region are making progress in all areas of the thematic cluster for CSD 16/17 cycle, while facing serious challenges at the same time.

187. Delegations noted that the impediments, barriers and constraints in meeting the commitments and targets of the current thematic cluster in the region include *inter alia* slow growth in agricultural production; inadequate investment in the agricultural sector; inequity of market access for agricultural products; intensive use of land and water resources; severe natural disasters; widening gap between urban and rural areas; shortfalls of institutions, governance and infrastructure; increase of oil prices; lack of technology and capacity; and inadequate financial resources for scientific research. It was also noted that the region has the largest population affected by land degradation, drought and desertification.

188. Participants noted that the lessons learnt and best practices in the thematic areas include *inter alia* empowering local communities, securing land tenure, promoting public and private partnerships, encouraging the participation and efforts of all stakeholders, promoting eco-efficiency, following the “green growth” approach, and addressing the needs of vulnerable segments of society, including small farmers and women.

189. The need to increase investment in the agricultural sector, including research and development was emphasized. Micro-finance was underscored as a promising form of investment.

190. It was noted that rural and urban development should be balanced through appropriate strategies. The mechanism of UNCCD should be fully and effectively used to combat desertification and land

degradation. Regional and sub-regional cooperation in dealing with trans-boundary pollution problems should be enhanced.

191. Delegations stressed that the impact of climate change has already been felt across the region, including on agricultural production and food security. Many participants also noted that the current food crisis is linked to climate change, water problems and soaring oil prices. Participants emphasized that a comprehensive approach should be taken in finding solutions for these problems. It was noted that the mitigation and adaptation strategies of climate change should include the perspective of gender, early warning system, disaster risk reduction and adequate funding.

192. Participants noted that bio-fuels could play a key role to improve access to energy; however they must be approached carefully and developed in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way. The energy security and food security should be fully taken into account and be balanced.

Latin America and the Caribbean

193. Participants noted that the region has registered productivity growth, including in the agricultural sector, while simultaneously experiencing the effects of environmental degradation. With the exception of the Caribbean subregion which marked an increase in its percentage of forested land, deforestation, drought, desertification, soil degradation and unsustainable land use continue to threaten the region as a whole. Recent years have seen a significant increase in desertification in the region. Rising demand for and inequitable access to natural resources, including land, water and energy, were also cited as constraints to sustainable development. Additional challenges, including high levels of poverty, rural to urban migration, and the vulnerability of the agricultural sector to economic shocks and natural disasters were also underscored.

194. Delegations noted that the impacts of climate change were already being felt throughout the region, particularly in the Caribbean subregion. In this regard, the vulnerabilities of the Caribbean SIDS, especially the impacts of food insecurity, rising energy prices, and sea-level rise were underscored. It was emphasized that characteristics such as limited natural resources, vulnerability to shocks continue to threaten the sustainable development of the SIDS in the region.

195. The effects of trade liberalization and agricultural subsidies on rural development, environment, agro-industries and food security were cited as a primary concern in the region. It was suggested that the elimination of agricultural subsidies could provide multiple benefits, including a boon to production in the developing countries in the region and additional resources for financing for development. Participants also noted that a balance between food and bio-fuel production was needed in the region, especially given the rising global food and energy prices. In this regard, it was suggested that land not suitable for agriculture production be targeted for the production of bio-pharmaceuticals and bio-fuels.

196. Participants highlighted the need for an integrated approach to sustainable development that considers the linkages between poverty, food and energy security, environment and economic growth. The need for a balanced approach to climate change that does not undermine rural industries, trade or food security in developing countries was emphasized. It was noted that regional integration and south-south cooperation can help spur growth. In this regard, reference was made to regional initiatives focusing on social development, particularly education, literacy, health, and primary services, was also integral.

197. The need to focus on supporting and advancing the implementation through financing, investment, and public-private partnerships was underscored. It was noted that technology transfer and capacity

building were key to raising agricultural and rural productivity. Participants also called for support from the international community to promote high work standards for rural labour.

ECE region

198. Participants underlined that making agriculture and farming more sustainable is a crucial issue for the region as well as developing regions, particularly Africa. Land degradation, desertification and drought have been recognized as essential challenges for development and ecosystems of the region. Soil degradation and impact of industrial pollution were also recognized as important challenges

199. It was noted that the management of agriculture and ecosystems should be better integrated, while the interaction between sustainable farming and other aspects of sustainable consumption and production policies must be reinforced. The agricultural markets should be stabilized to foster a smooth development of the rural areas. It was emphasized that agro-system management and organic farming need to be promoted throughout the region. It was also noted that farmers' organizations should be reinforced, as they contribute to the sustainable development of the agricultural sector.

200. Delegations underscored that the inter-linkages between environment and agriculture should be an important dimension of land policy. Integrating the multiple aspects of land policy will encourage farmers to preserve the environment and favour an optimal allocation of resources. Discussants noted that integrated land management requires good governance, guaranteeing an equal access to land for women and indigenous peoples and should be embraced through an interdisciplinary approach. It was also noted that land management must be based on clear and unambiguous land tenure.

201. It was emphasized that the current agricultural crisis may help farmers to rationalize agricultural production. Therefore the rise in prices can boost new investments, which ultimately will lead to an increase in production. It was noted however, that the potential implications for the environment of a rapid growth in output may be negative, which calls for a cautious approach to agricultural management.

202. Participants noted that regional and national differences significantly appear in the priorities and implementation experiences arising from them, which is evident both inside the region and globally. It was also noted, that at the same time many of the remarks made during the regional session on Africa coincide with the points made during the current regional session. It was emphasized that a number of common points of analysis can lead to strengthening of cooperation between the ECE region and Africa with the aim of reaching the MDGs along the path of sustainable development.

203. Delegations expressed belief that the results of all regional implementation meetings should be fully taken into account at the global level. It was noted that the sharing of best practices and the dissemination of information will create policy-making synergies that feed into national, regional and sub-regional implementation efforts, thereby bringing the world closer towards achievement of WSSD commitments. It was also noted that the future CSD sessions need to further integrate the five regional inputs.

V. Review of the implementation of Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Small Island Developing States Day)

204. The Commission on Sustainable Development is mandated to serve as the primary intergovernmental body responsible for the implementation of and follow-up to the commitments related to Small Island Developing States, including those contained in the Barbados Programme of Action and

the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation. In accordance with decision 13/1 taken at the Commission's thirteenth session, one day at each of its review sessions is devoted to monitoring progress on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. At the Commission's sixteenth session, that discussion was held on 12 May 2008.

205. Introductory statements were made by the Chairman of the Bureau for CSD-16, the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. The importance of a regular review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was underscored, as was the need to focus on its implementation. The Commission's mandate as the forum for this review was reiterated. Concern and regret was expressed that the scheduling of the work of the Commission this year did not afford a day for an exclusive review of the sustainable development challenges facing the Small Island Developing States. The importance of the preservation of an exclusive day for SIDS during the review sessions was therefore underscored.

206. Review of implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Mauritius Strategy for its further implementation was addressed in a general debate. Concern was expressed at the slow rate of implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy. It was noted that while the SIDS themselves have made some progress at the national and regional levels in building the institutional capacity for sustainable development, in formulating strategies and action plans, and in carrying out policy reforms, many of them continue to encounter constraints which have impeded their sustainable development. These included limited technical, financial and human resources.

207. Delegations also addressed the necessary means of implementation to advance the SIDS sustainable development agenda, including the need to reverse the downward trend in international financial flows to SIDS, including official development assistance, the need to improve terms of trade, facilitate the transfer of appropriate technology and to strengthen capacity-building to support SIDS efforts at adaptation to climate change.

208. Delegations drew attention to the structural disadvantages of SIDS in terms of small size in land, population and resource base, and high import dependence. Many delegations highlighted the fact that many SIDS have been particularly affected by the current dramatic rise in food and energy prices, which decreases their level of food security. It was noted that most SIDS, given their limited productive capacities, have not benefited, as a group, from the expansion of global trade and investment. The importance of a favourable external environment in respect of finance, investment and trade to support the sustainable development of SIDS was thus recognized.

209. An integrated review of the thematic issues being considered by the Commission was undertaken through two panel-led discussions Sustainable land management, drought and desertification were reviewed. Panel discussions also addressed land policy administration and management, the challenges and impacts of desertification, drought and invasive species in SIDS. Delegations stressed the vulnerability of SIDS exacerbated by the effects of climate change, including sea level rise, coral bleaching due to warming seas, increasing threats to fresh water supply, the propagation of invasive alien species and the increased frequency and intensity of cyclones, hurricanes and other extreme weather events. The need for effective land use strategies to address the increasing pressure on limited land resources in SIDS through strengthened human resource and institutional capacity, watershed, coastal zone and land use change management was considered.

210. Also reviewed were agriculture and rural development. Discussions focused on agro-tourism and a range of niche markets which offered scope for the development of rural industries. Tourism was highlighted as a growth sector that provided opportunities for direct revenue transactions with rural communities, thus contributing to the revitalization of agriculture and rural development, strengthening food security in SIDS and promoting the wellbeing of rural communities. It was also highlighted that the sustainable management of fisheries, forestry and agriculture and freshwater resources was important to improving food security and access in SIDS.

211. The contribution to the sustainable development of SIDS through the cooperation among the various stakeholders was highlighted. International partnerships, including public-private partnerships and South-South cooperation were recognized for their potential to contribute constructively to the mobilization of resources in support of SIDS.

212. Support was widely expressed for the opportunity afforded by SIDS Day to review the achievements and continuing challenges faced by Small Island Developing States in respect of this thematic cluster. The ongoing effort of Small Island Developing States and their commitment to innovative action was noted. Commitments of continued support for the sustainable development efforts of SIDS were expressed. The need for strengthening the small island developing States Unit in the secretariat, in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions, to support the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation was underscored.

VI. Review of CSD-13 Decisions on Water and Sanitation

Introduction

213. It was noted that the decisions reached in 2005 reflect a firm inter-governmental consensus on the critical role that access to water and basic sanitation plays for the overall achievement of the MDGs including the eradication of poverty. Also, it was overwhelmingly recognized that IWRM is the framework for the entire water sector and an essential tool to effectively manage water resources and water related issues. Some countries indicated that the CSD review on progress of water and sanitation should really go beyond mere stocktaking.

214. Climate change was identified as a major challenge for many countries in terms of its potential impact on water and food security, contributing in particular to an increase in extreme hydrological events such as floods and drought. Speakers noted the importance of mainstreaming adaptation to climate change in the water management process and the development of concrete measures in this regard.

215. Various aspects of the water and sanitation were addressed, including the importance of global and national monitoring of the sector at all levels; the need for reliable data supported by improved knowledge and research; transfer of technology and capacity building; the importance of water governance and a participatory approach to water and sanitation; the role of partnerships, including public-private partnership; and the importance of strengthening water utilities to extend provision of services. Many countries pointed to limited financial resources as the main constraint for achieving water and sanitation goals.

Providing access to safe drinking water and sanitation services

216. The importance of access to safe drinking water and sanitation services for poverty alleviation and for meeting other MDGs was emphasised, and in particular its interlinkages with health. Many

delegations urged all stakeholders to take necessary actions to accelerate progress. Some highlighted access to water and sanitation as a human right. Women bear the heaviest burden of securing water supplies for household needs and have an important role in hygiene education and water management. However, the priority given to water and sanitation by developing countries in their national development plans has not been adequately echoed and supported at the international level.

217. It was noted that progress has been made towards achieving access to safe drinking water but current trends indicate that the sanitation target will not be met. Progress has been uneven among regions and also within countries, particularly with rural areas often lagging behind. In addition to limited availability of financial resources, the lack of legislation and national policies for water and sanitation continue to impede progress.

218. The absence of water treatment facilities in certain areas poses an obstacle for environmental management and for providing safe drinking water. This obstacle could be overcome by developing and implementing sustainable water and sanitation plans which takes into account wastewater management. In this regard, it is important to use technologies that are suitable to local conditions.

219. Further investment in water supply and sanitation and IWRM in particular from national governments, the private sector and Official Development Assistance is required to accelerate progress towards meeting the water-related targets, especially for sanitation, particularly in rural areas. This alone will not be sufficient, and there is a need to explore innovative mechanisms for resource mobilization using, for example, local capital markets.

220. Many speakers called for the support to further strengthen local institutional capacities on water and sanitation related issues, including hygiene education and infrastructure development is needed. This will help in reducing the burden of water-borne diseases and health-related costs.

Building partnerships for capacity building and technology transfer

221. The importance of partnerships to support the efforts made in formulating and implementing water and sanitation policies was emphasised. They add value to provide assistance in addition to Official Development Assistance and international cooperation. Many speakers shared successful examples of North-South and South-South cooperation and expressed their readiness to share their experiences, technologies and best practices. Scaling up of these practices, however, continue to remain an important challenge. On the issue of technology transfer, many speakers stressed the importance of promoting access to appropriate low-cost and environmentally sustainable water use and supply technologies, for which North-South and South-South cooperation and other similar partnerships can play an important role.

Improving the efficiency of water utilities

222. In many countries the absence of a legal and regulatory environment that stimulates good governance hinders water and sanitation utilities to operate in a cost effective way and to provide reliable and sustainable services. Strengthening technical capacities of utility workers and staff could improve effectiveness of these utilities.

223. Investing in hydraulic infrastructure and the maintenance of existing water infrastructure is necessary for stimulating economic growth and social development. Various mechanisms to finance these investments were identified. Some participants emphasized that implementing cost-recovery policies is vital for operational sustainability of water utilities and for expanding the provision of services.

224. The exchange of information among utilities can be seen as a cost efficient and effective way of sharing experiences and best practices in managing water utilities and extending their service coverage. In addition to providing technical support to urban utilities, strengthening the capacities of rural water operators should receive priority, especially through sharing of successful examples.

Engaging stakeholders in implementation process

225. Involving stakeholders in decision making processes can contribute to their sustainable livelihoods. Some countries reported the full involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of their water resources management and water and sanitation programmes. Evidence suggests that the water policy and programmes that encourage the involvement of water user's associations and local Governments in operation, maintenance and management of water and sanitation facilities leads to enhanced sustainability of the systems and more sustained delivery of services.

Strengthening monitoring and reporting

226. The Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) is an important mechanism to monitor progress towards water and sanitation targets. Many speakers noted that inadequate data-gathering, analysis and prediction is an obstacle to understanding and addressing issues on water resources management, access to water and sanitation and impacts of climate change on water variability. Also, difficulties in monitoring IWRM implementation have been observed.

227. It was noted that the monitoring methodology needs to be tailored to the local environment and conditions. Measuring trends and progress require data and information to strengthen collaboration among water related entities and statistical offices. Lack of human and institutional capacity and lack of resources both from national and international sources are added challenges.

228. Effective monitoring and follow-up on water and sanitation related decisions are crucial means to further mobilize and streamline resources for water, sanitation and IWRM. In this respect, additional efforts are needed to make the water and sanitation review in CSD-20 more meaningful. Towards this aim, strengthening monitoring capacities and enhancing further coordination of existing monitoring processes at all levels will be important.

229. While noting successful efforts of UN-Water, there was a call for its increased role in monitoring the progress of water, sanitation and IWRM commitments. Monitoring mechanisms, however, must consider equity and ecological concerns, along with global targets.

Implementing IWRM

230. IWRM is an essential tool for effectively managing water resources and for improved delivery of water services. However, IWRM needs to be tailored to local conditions by establishing water governance involving various stakeholders and by adopting integrated water resources management approaches at basin level which address water quantity and quality, drought and floods. In addition, water research and science play an important role in advancing the principles and implementation of IWRM.

231. Strong stakeholders' participation, in particular according to the local context, through establishing water resources bodies at the national and provincial and basin levels, will be a step in the right direction to promote balanced IWRM approaches. Reforms to decentralize the decision-making and intervention processes at community, river catchments and national levels have to be guided by national water policy anchored in IWRM principles. Accordingly, water issues need to be set high in the political

agenda of national development strategies, poverty reduction plans and national budgets, and integrated in other sectoral policies.

232. IWRM should integrate the three pillars of sustainable development. Experiences in IWRM at the basin or catchments' level have shown successful results and in particular with regard to involvement of local actors, transparent decision making, equitable water uses, as well as various innovative mechanisms for financing water management. In addition to clear legislative frameworks at basin level, the "polluter-pays-principle" was identified as one of the successful tools for securing sound basis for the implementation of IWRM.

233. Water issues are not only technical and institutional issues: they have also intrinsic political content which has to be explicitly considered in order to be able to solve effective difficulties linked to competition among stakeholders and interests. In this regard, various speakers pointed out the need for more transboundary agreements to share expected benefits of better cooperation on international water courses or groundwater resources.

234. Some countries suggested the need for discussing a new paradigm for IWRM to focus more on moving from "plan and process" stage to advancing the implementation that is measurable with tangible indicators. Within the context of IWRM, the issues of transboundary water resources management, balancing the competing uses of water, and the linkages between water-related extreme events and health also need to be considered. Some expressed the need to discuss progress on water-related issues during CSD-17 without waiting for the next review in 2012. Others were of the view that CSD-13 mandated the review of water and sanitation in 2008 and then in 2012; anything that goes beyond stock-taking should take place in 2012 at the next review of water and sanitation.

235. More frequent droughts increase water scarcity. Decreasing availability of water reduces agriculture production and contributes to food shortages and hunger. These aspects are beyond the control of local people and require appropriate public and collective actions, in order to avoid situations leading to prolonged food insecurity. Reducing impacts of climate change requires programmes and measures of mitigation and adaptation which are directly linked to water management. Mainstreaming climate change and its impacts into water management planning process will facilitate adaptation, but must be supported by appropriate national legislation.

VII. Interactive discussion with Major Groups

236. At its sixteenth session, the Commission continued its tradition of encouraging participation by major groups in its deliberation. CSD-16 has seen enhanced contributions of major groups, as reflected in the increased number of interventions by major groups in thematic discussions.

237. In addition, the Commission included two multi-stakeholder dialogue segments as part of its official proceedings, one along with representatives of WSSD partnerships. The multi-stakeholder dialogue segment held on Tuesday 6 May involved representatives of women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, the scientific and technological community, and farmers. Lead organizations from each sector were invited by the secretariat to consult with their constituencies to prepare official dialogue papers and to organize the participation of their delegations. This dialogue provided an opportunity for a focused discussion on the role of major groups in promoting implementation activities in relation to the thematic cluster.

238. On Friday 9 May an interactive dialogue among major groups, Governments, and representatives of partnerships for sustainable development provided a unique opportunity for a focused discussion on the role of partners in supporting and expediting the implementation of sustainable development, with special attention to the CSD-16 thematic cluster. This session represented a new effort by the Commission to inspire practical and dynamic dialogue among different stakeholders. It was the first time since the WSSD that representatives of major groups and partnerships held a conversation with Governments in their efforts to support and facilitate implementation. The dialogue included representatives of the nine major group sectors and representatives of six CSD-registered partnerships, and was supported by information contained in the Secretary-General's report on Partnership for Sustainable Development and Background Paper #1.

239. During these two interactive discussions, major groups, Governments, and representatives of partnership highlighted the following:

Obstacles and Constraints

240. Limited access to land rights, credit, technology, markets and extension services severely constrains agricultural productivity and sustainable livelihoods, especially of women farmers in developing countries. A farmer-centered approach to agricultural partnerships is important, but poor communication between farmer organizations and Governments often impedes the work of farmers' associations.

241. Response to the current food crisis requires an increase in agricultural productivity, while ensuring that natural resources are managed in a sustainable manner, and ecosystems are preserved. Reducing pre- and post-harvest losses, which average around 50 percent globally and are highest in developing countries, demands transfer and dissemination of existing technologies and management practices, including risk management tools, and provision of good science to small-scale farmers in rural areas. The response to the food crisis should look at both root causes and symptoms, but disaggregated statistics of natural, human, social and physical capital are often missing. Further studies should help to increase understanding of the impacts of biotechnology and biofuels in relation to food security with a view to developing a balance between biofuels and food production.

242. The lack of right agricultural policies and enabling environments also represent an impediment for farmers. Small-scale agriculture should be promoted, as large scale agricultural practices may not be appropriate for some groups, such as indigenous peoples, for whom land is the key resource for survival. Public-private partnerships tend to be supply rather than demand-driven, and can be improved, especially with regard to agricultural research. Particular attention needs to be paid to the appropriate use of chemicals in agriculture in order to ensure human safety and reduce unwanted impacts. Unsustainable agricultural production patterns cause 40,000 deaths from pesticide use each year. More should be done to provide decent work and to address inequalities among agricultural workers. In addition, more must be done to improve sustainable livestock production, since national planning generally excludes the 3 million pastoralists in Africa whose traditional livelihoods are increasingly threatened by globalization and climate change.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices

243. It is clear that major groups must be fully engaged and included in decision-making processes to ensure sustainable development, and the active participation of major groups in the work of the Commission is widely praised. Indigenous peoples welcomed the recently adopted UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for partnering with Governments, and local authorities

underlined that a bottom-up, participatory approach to development can ensure the active engagement of major groups in the broader sustainable development discussion beyond CSD.

244. Advancing the implementation of sustainable development through multi-stakeholder partnerships involves a number of strategies for success. Nurturing the early stages of a partnership and feeding it into larger organizations for additional support has proven to be helpful. Investing in capacity building of major groups involved in partnerships can be achieved through provision of decent work, respect for human rights, transfer of responsibility to local levels, and blending of science and technology with local knowledge.

245. There are many examples of successful case studies and partnerships illustrating models of sustainable agriculture and rural development that incorporate indigenous knowledge systems and practices, land use planning, water management, small enterprise development and income generation. Yet these implementation efforts require more support if they are to be scaled-up enough to make significant progress. Knowledge-sharing systems should be strengthened, results should be documented and shared, and successful efforts should be replicated. Partnerships that include local ownership, a clear understanding of goals, active collaboration of all stakeholders, good donor coordination, flexibility to respond to changing situations, and ability to keep partners involved in the long-term are the most successful.

246. An energetic youth force is emerging that intends to hold Governments responsible for their commitments. Youth are increasingly integrated into Government delegations in some regions, and their presence as current and future producers and leaders has inspired progress in the creation of new outreach education programs in sustainable agriculture and rural development. Integrating sustainability themes into all levels of education is an important measure that would ensure that future generations are conscious of sustainable development.

Means of Implementation

247. There is a pronounced need for investment in agricultural infrastructure, extension services, research, appropriate technologies, risk management tools, weather forecasting and early warning systems. However, international resource flows often do not reach the agricultural sector, which receives only four percent of ODA flows. A particular emphasis should be placed on facilitating the access of smallholder farmers to such services.

248. It can be difficult to mobilize innovative financial mechanisms and other support for partnerships, especially in the early stages, and there is often a lack of funding for institutional and capacity building. While private funding is increasing, the decline in public funding is a concern. Partners are challenged to translate a long-term vision into short-term benefits for local communities, foster inclusiveness and trust among partners at the local level, and engage and empower local communities to own their projects. The considerable coordination efforts required of partnerships demand additional resources, and can result in duplications and overlapping efforts, particularly at the regional level. Understanding how to manage competitiveness, recognize rights, and take social issues into account, especially at the global level, is crucial.

249. In both rural and urban areas, channelling technological and financial support through local authorities, and entrusting them with responsibility to provide sustainable services related to energy, water, sanitation, and economic development can empower them to take more direct and effective action at the community level. More women should be placed in decision and policymaking positions, and women should be given greater access to development services, credit, and markets.

Continuing Challenges

250. Poverty remains the greatest challenge, and is increasingly urbanized. As rural-urban migration in Africa accelerates, so is the percentage of urban residents living in slums, and the impacts on women and children are especially adverse. At least 1 billion people live without basic services and adequate food supplies. Both urban and rural poverty must be tackled involving local communities in order to tackle the emerging food crisis, produce decent employment, and protect fundamental human rights. Promoting good governance at national and international levels can ensure that local Governments are in place to implement appropriate measures.