

CSD-16 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 14 MAY 2008

On Wednesday, CSD-16 participants convened in the UN General Assembly Hall to hear UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's opening statement to the High-level Segment, following which ministers and heads of delegation presented statements. Two Ministerial Roundtables convened during the late afternoon. Speakers expressed their condolences to Myanmar and China following their recent natural disasters.

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

Chair Nhema opened the High-level Segment. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that, after 25 years' neglect, the importance of agriculture was back on the agenda due to the current food crisis. He explained a key recommendation of his MDG Africa Steering Group is to launch a green revolution in the context of NEPAD. He said the stakes are high, solutions cannot wait and CSD should be a key step in the sequence of international efforts.

Antigua and Barbuda, for G-77/CHINA, said developing countries face similar trade, finance and capacity challenges. Istok Jarc, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Slovenia, for the EU, underscored that some African policies have negatively affected sustainable development and said the EU hoped for improved governance. Grenada, for AOSIS, called for a transformation in unsustainable production and consumption patterns in developed countries, a change in the CSD review format, and an exclusive "SIDS Day" at future CSDs. Tonga, for PSIDS, called for strengthening the SIDS Unit, which would act as a focal point on its climate change dialogue. Bangladesh, for LDCs, called for a coherent response addressing the short-, medium-, and long-term effects of the current fuel, food and water crises, as well as a fulfillment of ODA commitments to LDCs.

Sahas Bunditkul, Deputy Prime Minister, THAILAND, highlighted the country's agricultural strategy built on the "sufficient economy" philosophy, which has led to higher incomes for small farmers. Gerda Verburg, Minister for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, NETHERLANDS, said increased agricultural investment and market access are necessary, and urged states to make the Doha Round a "real development round." Paavo Vayrynen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, FINLAND, said environment and development issues should be addressed holistically. John Gormley, Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government, IRELAND, said it is committed to increasing ODA to 0.7% of GNP by 2012. Jozef Graf, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, HUNGARY, highlighted the need to

reconsider policies that restrain trade or production. Arturas Pailauskas, Minister of Environment, LITHUANIA, explained his government's financial support to organic farms and afforestation of lands.

Joseph Pröll, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, AUSTRIA, argued that financial speculation in agricultural commodities is causing the current food crisis, and called for an international tax on short-term speculation. COSTA RICA's Minister for Environment and Energy, Roberto Dobles, said his country plans to become carbon neutral by 2021. Fahad Baleghnaim, Minister of Agriculture, SAUDI ARABIA, outlined progress made in implementation and research in managing drought and desertification. Esther Byer-Suckoo, Minister of Family, Youth, Sports and Environment, BARBADOS, highlighted its "people-centered and participatory approach" towards sustainable development, and underscored the need for international partnership. Du Ying, Vice-Chairman, National Development and Reform Commission, CHINA, called for efforts to establish a just and fair multilateral trading system, address desertification collectively and strengthen the UNCCD. Predrag Nenezid, MONTENEGRO's Minister of Tourism and Environment, Dao Xuan, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, VIETNAM, and Lee Byung-Wook, Vice Minister of Environment, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, highlighted national implementation efforts related to the CSD-16 themes. Ahizi Daniel, Minister of Environment, COTE D'IVOIRE, said his country exports coffee and cocoa, but it has to import nearly half its rice.

Marthius Van Schalkwyk, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, SOUTH AFRICA, referred to the "food price crisis" and called for an end to the economic marginalization of Africa, trade distortions and barriers, and an expeditious completion of the Doha Round. Anil Kumar Bachoo, Minister of Environment and National Development Unit, MAURITIUS, said assistance packages need to be more responsive to country needs and highlighted that strategic environmental assessments were helpful for assessing biofuels' impacts.

Kwadwo Adjei Darko, Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Environment, GHANA, highlighted the need to enhance agricultural production and to promote industrialization. Erlan Nigmatulin, Senate of Parliament, KAZAKHSTAN, said his country has specific quantitative targets for sustainable development and would like to host an Earth Summit in 2012. Matthias Machnig, State Secretary, Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, GERMANY, advocated adoption of standards for all food, feed and fuel agricultural products, and food as a basic human right. Amb. Mona Brøther, NORWAY, urged integrating

climate change adaptation and disaster reduction strategies in key sector policies, securing women's rights and roles as change agents, and developing sustainable criteria for biofuels under a UN mandate.

Yael Shaltiel, Director-General, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, ISRAEL, highlighted the importance of water efficiency and committed to share experiences and technology with developing countries. Bruno Itoua, Minister of Energy and Water, REPUBLIC OF CONGO, stressed: capacity building; IWRM; strengthening governance; monitoring and evaluation; and finance mobilization. Josip Kraljickovic, State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development, CROATIA, stressed: exchange of experiences; reform of agricultural policies; environmental protection; food security; energy; education; and partnership.

Luis Medeiros Vieira, PORTUGAL's Under-Secretary of State for Agriculture and Fisheries, highlighted the creation of the first strategic action plan for partnership between Africa and the EU, adopted in December 2007 in Lisbon. Mobutu Nzanga, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO's Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, noted the important role his country's forests play as carbon sinks, and called attention to shared and differentiated responsibilities related to remuneration for environmental goods and services.

Ahmed Elanwer, Minister's Assistant for Legal Affairs, EGYPT, highlighted his country's vulnerability to climate change and sea-level rise, and said vulnerable countries need technical and financial support. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, NAMIBIA's Minister of Environment and Tourism, called for the removal of trade-distorting agricultural subsidies and for concluding the Doha Round.

CHAIR'S DRAFT SUMMARY OF CSD-16

In the mid-afternoon, Chair Nhema invited G-77/CHINA to provide comments on the draft Chair's Summary, Part I. Regarding general comments and the introduction, G-77/CHINA said many countries had highlighted the importance of international cooperation to combat desertification and that partnerships should "complement," as opposed to "replace," international cooperation. She stressed that many emphasized the constraints and challenges posed by the persistence of agricultural subsidies in developed countries, and urged it be reflected more strongly. Regarding the section on agriculture, she said many delegations underscored the development dimension of the Doha Round. On rural development, she said reference to the "share of ODA allocated to agriculture by international lending agencies" was factually incorrect, and that loans do not form part of ODA. She said the section on means of implementation requires strengthening. She also said further reference was required to financing and capacity building support for adaptation to climate change. She also stressed that many delegates underlined the CSD's mandate to follow-up commitments related to SIDS.

MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLES

INVESTING IN AFRICA TO ACHIEVE THE MDGS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: This Roundtable was chaired by CSD-16 Chair Nhema. UN Deputy Secretary-General Asha Rose Migiro highlighted the need to provide education, health care, water, sanitation and other basic services in Africa. Willem-Alexander, Prince of Orange and Chair of the UNSGAB, said water is the key factor for food production and a new green revolution is needed, and stressed industrial development, political will, financial resources, action and partnership.

Many speakers emphasized the importance of NEPAD and its emphasis on Africans taking responsibility for their own development and not having solutions imposed from outside.

Speakers called attention to international partnerships and cooperation, such as the EU-Africa partnerships and South-South cooperation, but some said the latter should not be based on the North-South model. Actions such as opening markets to Africa, investing in basic infrastructure, helping African countries attract foreign direct investment, providing capacity building in trade-related areas, removing agricultural subsidies in the Doha Round, and legal empowerment were highlighted. South Africa also mentioned improved international policy coherence and granting African governments "policy space." Farmers asked how many Presidents have sat down with farmers to ask what they need to produce enough food for the country. Local Authorities emphasized that the democratic process is taking root in Africa. NGOs reminded delegates that local people possess knowledge.

Zimbabwe reported that during the retreat of African ministers last weekend, African countries committed to meet their development goals in partnership with the international community, and stressed increasing ODA to Africa. Chair Nhema drew participants' attention to the outcome of the African Ministerial Retreat, which was summarized in a Vision Statement.

INTER-LINKAGES AMONG THE THEMATIC ISSUES, INCLUDING ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This roundtable was chaired by Vice-Chair Carmon. Under-Secretary-General Sha Zukang made opening remarks and cautioned participants that in search for solutions to the food crisis, a piecemeal approach will not suffice. Participants focused discussion on food security with some suggesting a food security fund as well as providing incentives to farmers, and developing financial institutions targeting small farmers. While delegates agreed with the need to provide emergency food aid, some called for an exit strategy to avoid creating dependency and destroying food production. Participants stressed the risks and benefits of biofuels. Many highlighted the need to look toward second and third generation biofuels that do not use food crops.

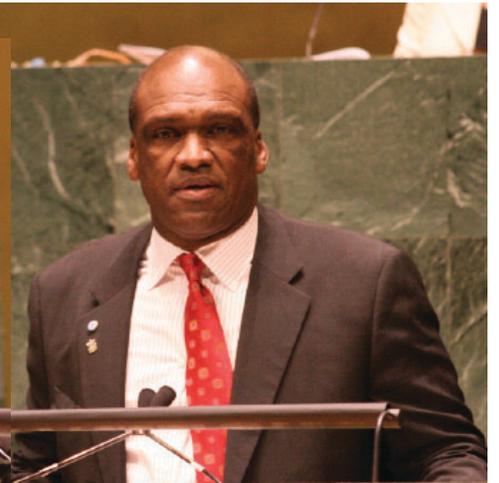
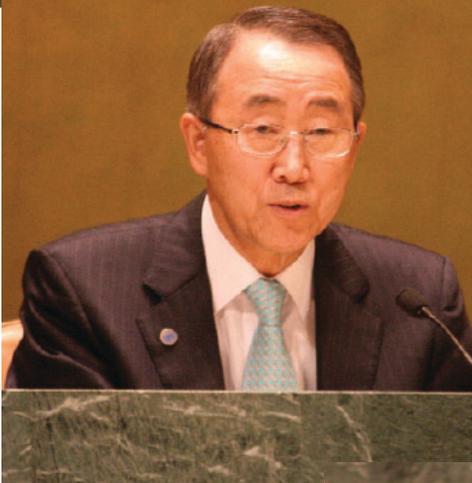
Many emphasized the need for enhanced community education to empower local people to take decisions based on local context, increased research on crops, capacity building to deliver technical know-how in remote areas, increased monitoring and data collection, and data accessibility. Numerous speakers mentioned the need for the expeditious completion of the Doha Round and the elimination of commercial barriers.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Participants commented in the corridors on the ministerial discussion's kick-off with a series of politically potent interventions, which they saw as giving a boost to countries' positions expressed earlier in the week. The impression was that ministers seemed well briefed on the issue of biofuels, and repeatedly stressed the need for a sustainable approach that would not encroach on food production. In this connection, some took note of the balanced and forward-looking interventions of the Netherlands, which some CSD observers interpreted as one more sign that it might be preparing to take up the role of CSD-17 Chair.

Meanwhile, the statement of African ministers emanating from the weekend retreat was circulated informally. Some observed shuttle diplomacy in the corridors among the African delegates during the High-level Segment, and suggested that its formal presentation was held up by last-minute drafting difficulties. The statement evokes political will and a "clear vision" for Africa's sustainable development, and reaffirms a series of global and Africa-related commitments. According to some delegates, the document encapsulates the African perspective and might be used as a negotiating brief for the final Chair's summary of CSD-16, and possibly for the policy part of this cycle.

Photos from the High-Level Segment





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