

CSD-16 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 6 MAY 2008

On Tuesday, CSD-16 discussed rural development and interconnections between agriculture and rural development. Delegates also completed their consideration of regional perspectives on the CSD-16 agenda items, and dialogued with Major Groups.

THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS

RURAL DEVELOPMENT: CSD-16 Vice-Chair Ojdanic chaired the session. Panel discussions followed the Secretariat's introduction of the report (E/CN.17/2008/4). Olivier Belle (Chair, Commission on the Status of Women) called for actively involving women in community activities and decision-making. Taghi Farvar (IUCN) highlighted obstacles faced by the rural poor and indigenous people. Yacine Diagne (ENDA Tiers Monde) suggested that farmers need simple instruments, and highlighted links between rural energy availability and productivity. Naresh Singh (Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor) reviewed recommendations to be presented to the UN on 3 June 2008, including the suggestion to focus on vulnerability and systemic changes that address power relations and have the confidence of the poor. Jeanette Gurung (Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management) recommended investing in women as environmental managers as well as farmers, and said a network of women agricultural ministers would be launched next week.

The G-77/CHINA called for an integrated approach and a conducive international development environment. The EU highlighted its policy promoting the multifunctional role of agriculture. The RIO GROUP elaborated 12 action areas, including using micro-credits and targeted support programs. PSIDS called for integrated and sector-wide approaches. The AFRICAN GROUP said Africa is not on track to achieving the MDGs, and suggested diversifying rural economies. INDIA highlighted the positive impact of institutional development in poverty reduction. IRAN focused on dryland communities and urged building on their traditional knowledge. SOUTH AFRICA elaborated its national policy and market-based efforts. CHINA said it was the first developing country to realize the MDG target on poverty reduction. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION encouraged using toolkits with financial mechanisms and market strategies, and underlined data, and environmental and economic indicators to assess development. CANADA highlighted its efforts, particularly in the First Nations.

MOROCCO introduced its 600 rural development projects and called on donors to provide financial assistance. The

US highlighted the need for economic development and its diversity in rural areas. ZIMBABWE suggested enhancing rural development, empowerment of women, rural planning, decentralization, and access to markets by farmers. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY described efforts made by China's business sector in combating desertification. The SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY highlighted the importance of data collection for informed decision making.

SWITZERLAND described areas of its ODA, including projects in mountain areas and empowerment of women. INDONESIA stressed water and sanitation, information, banking services, education, poverty reduction, and economic development in rural areas.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT: CSD-16 Vice-Chair Suntizo-Sandoval chaired the session. Piragibe dos Santos Tarragö (Brazil) stressed the need to develop rules, lift restrictions and distortions, end subsidies and achieve full liberalization in agricultural trade. He Maochun (Tsinghua University, China) called for expanding developed countries' aid programs. Christ Leaver (Oxford College) discussed past agricultural innovations and highlighted the future potential of genomics. Senator Edgardo Angarra (Philippines) urged developed countries to honor the Doha Round and Uruguay Round commitments. John Pender (International Food Policy Research Institute) proposed methods to reverse downward spirals in agricultural productivity, land degradation and poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa.

INDIA, VENEZUELA, TOGO and MOROCCO outlined their initiatives, plans, programmes and experiences in agriculture and rural development. NORWAY highlighted agriculture's multifunctional role. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA suggested conducting a scientific review of the benefits and disadvantages of biofuels. CHILDREN AND YOUTH called for a complete revolution in rural development that involves young people.

LIBYA highlighted its initiatives including investment in Sub-Saharan Africa. THAILAND discussed its national policy that seeks economic sufficiency, moderation in consumption, and careful management. SWITZERLAND suggested changing consumption patterns using sustainable agricultural products. The FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA urged incorporating potential climate change risks into programs. FARMERS proposed bioenergy use and data gathering on, *inter alia*, land use change and greenhouse gas impacts. PALESTINE noted the impacts of foreign occupation. MALAYSIA called for a competitive agricultural sector with high scale production. The CZECH REPUBLIC discussed the use of agricultural insurance

as a strategy to spread risk. SAUDI ARABIA explained how new water technologies have enhanced agriculture.

SENEGAL described its national program, including a fund for local development. ISRAEL reiterated the importance of waste water treatment, water reuse and recycling. MALAWI said it has provided seeds to the rural poor and trained farmers. PSIDS highlighted the need to further develop national fishery industries and infrastructure. MAURITANIA called on developed countries to support agricultural development. BRAZIL supported biofuels.

WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS called attention to the plight of migrant workers. CUBA detailed the global systemic nature of the challenges to poverty reduction, agriculture and rural development. GUYANA said the repositioning of the region's agriculture depends on a conducive international environment.

REGIONAL DISCUSSIONS

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC: This session was chaired by Vice-Chair Tharyat, who presented the report of the Regional Implementation Meeting (RIM) for Asia and the Pacific (E/CN.17/2008/12/Add.2). Sanjay Kumar (India) outlined several conclusions concerning land degradation, drought and desertification, and cited India's experience. Elenita Dano (Third World Network) lauded the RIM's openness to civil society. Meena Bigli (Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management) said biofuel production competes with food production and requires a cautious approach. CHILDREN AND YOUTH said young people are the first and worst affected during a food crisis. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY noted that rural entrepreneurs in China have initiated poverty relief projects. THAILAND said food and energy security must be balanced. The SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY highlighted the need for continued support to developing countries. FARMERS noted that the decision to grow food or fuel is governed by the market. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA suggested identifying ways to reduce the environmental impact of agriculture. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES cautioned against a planned uranium mining project in India. BANGLADESH underscored the vulnerability of the region to climate change. TRADE UNIONS AND WORKERS stressed that now is the time to act.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: This session was chaired by Vice-Chair Santizo-Sandoval. Ana Bianchi (Argentina) presented the report of the second Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development (E/CN.17/2008/12/Add.3), and underlined the region's diversity. Marianne Schaper (ECLAC) underscored negative trends on the social and environment fronts, and the vulnerabilities of agriculture. Sergio Zelaya (UNCCD focal point for LAC) emphasized the new Ten-year Strategic Plan. A presentation by Teresita Borges Hernández (Cuba) was read by the Secretariat, and described the vulnerabilities and challenges of the region.

WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS asked why ILO standards were not being discussed. FARMERS noted the importance of public funds for rural development. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY said farm-level training is essential. CHILDREN AND YOUTH expressed concern at the interventions supporting industrial farming. The SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY highlighted the importance of increasing knowledge of best practices. BARBADOS underscored addressing the impact of subsidies in the lead-up to the Doha meeting on Financing for Development. VENEZUELA stressed the need to complete the Doha Round.

UNECE: This session was chaired by Vice-Chair Daniel Carmon. Violeta Ivanov (Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Moldova) presented the regional contribution

of the UNECE (E/CN.17/2008/12/Add.5). Colien Hefferan (US) explained US agricultural initiatives and highlighted the importance of linking knowledge to action. Elisabeth Gauffin (Chair, Swedish Farmers' Federation) called for higher prices for farmers' produce, stronger farmers' organizations, and more stability for farmers. Peter Creuzer (Agency for Geoinformation, Land Development and Real Estate, Hanover, Germany) underscored strengthening partnerships with Africa. Nadine Gouzee (Belgium) highlighted the linkages between production and consumption patterns and economic growth.

The EU noted that panelists' comments on Europe coincided with those made on Africa and said these points could form the foundation for cooperation. BELARUS lamented that agricultural workers were the lowest paid of any sector. WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS noted the precarious position of European and North American agricultural workers. AUSTRIA stressed the significant role of indigenous and local communities. The US underscored the importance of intensive agriculture to meet increasing food demand. BALTIC 21 highlighted its efforts to promote socially integrated rural communities. CHILDREN AND YOUTH spoke about the challenges of increased rural unemployment.

DIALOGUE WITH MAJOR GROUPS: The session was chaired by Vice-Chair Ojdanic. WOMEN presented experiences and challenges of small scale agriculture. CHILDREN AND YOUTH urged increased youth participation in government delegations. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES urged partnerships with governments to manage land and resources, and stressed the vulnerability of indigenous people to globalization, industrial crops and climate change. NGOs noted the food crisis was not surprising, as it developed over several years.

The NETHERLANDS underlined the unique nature of dialogue with Major Groups, a sentiment echoed by BELGIUM and AUSTRIA, who urged concrete suggestions on youth involvement in sustainable development, and on ways to enhance Major Groups' role in the CSD.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES underscored the challenge of translating international policy guidelines to the local level and highlighted the need for power and resources at this level. NIGERIA called on all governments to go beyond mere policies. Highlighting the need to protect workers, WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS said 40,000 workers die each year of pesticide poisoning, and said the quantity of chemicals used should be reduced. The US underscored its efforts to include environmental provisions in trade agreements.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY discussed the usefulness of technologies to address pre- and post-harvest losses. The SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY stressed aligning farmers and science and technology. FARMERS highlighted the need to demystify science and to transfer knowledge to farmers.

IN THE CORRIDORS

CSD-16 participants crowded into thematic sessions on rural development and agriculture, whilst attendance at regional sessions was relatively sparse, consisting mainly of regional and major group representatives. Comments were heard on the perennial CSD dilemma – how best to promote interactive dialogue? Many appreciated the panel presentations that opened each session, but were disappointed that the discussion mostly consisted of prepared statements, although they noted that a lot of information to “review” had been presented. Others suggested that a more dynamic approach from session chairs or alternative room configurations might help. However, the end of the meeting saw a spurt of lively dialogue with Major Groups, a sign that the pattern may change in the coming days.