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Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting (IPM)  
17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development  
Dialogue with Major Groups – 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2009

## **Statement on behalf of the Workers and Trade Unions Major Group**

Thank you Chair, Ladies and gentleman,

As the Chair and most of you rightly pointed out this morning, we are living in a context of profound crises. It is our view that agriculture and rural development have a role to play in addressing these crises in an integrated manner, and that we should not miss this opportunity for realizing sustainable development and changing agricultural production.

On behalf of the workers and trade unions major group I would like to briefly introduce you the main policy options we would like to see this IPM to promote.

In this session, we will make the case for promoting “green growth”, new jobs and rural employment. A few months ago, unions launched a report jointly written with the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Labour Organisation and employers, which emphasises the role Green jobs can play in a new green economy, including in agriculture. The promotion of concrete policies aiming at creating good and green employment in rural areas are expected from this meeting.

Inequality is raising in our world and this is to be aggravated by recent instability in food prices, which also threatens low income earners. Vigorous and immediate actions need to be taken to protect the purchasing power of rural and urban workers, especially in developing countries.

Further regulation of commodity markets and promotion of a development-centered agriculture is needed. In addition, trade unions think that there is a need for agriculture to become sustainable for communities, through the provision of decent and high quality jobs, as this will be key in combating poverty, reducing vulnerability to economic, social and environmental changes and for empowering communities. There is a need to promote the shift from informal to formal work in this sector, thereby extending coverage of rights, social protection and social dialogue as well as increasing earnings, in particular for vulnerable groups, such as women workers and young workers.

Chair, agricultural work remains one of the three most dangerous occupations in the world, with more than 170,000 workers killed every year. Pesticides only kill 40,000 workers annually. A truly sustainable agriculture can not ignore the need for fostering the implementation of the sound management of chemicals and for respecting occupational health and safety standards, such as those provided by the International Labour Organisation.

Unions call also on governments to provide with long-term solutions to populations which will face climate change-related stresses. Economic diversification, alternative income opportunities as well as training for workers and employers will be needed.

Chair, during this meeting we will be making the case for workers and trade unions being part of ambitious policies aimed at advancing sustainable development in all this CSD policy themes.

We look forward for a successful meeting under your guidance.

Thank you.