

Opening Statement of the United States

United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development

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Mr. Chairman, the United States appreciates this opportunity to take stock of where we are on achieving our goals on water, sanitation, and human settlements. Thanks to your leadership, the Bureau and the Secretariat have structured an innovative session that we hope marks the beginning of an “era of implementation.”

Our focus on implementation will require a shift in our discussions from a focus on the global level to the regional, national, and local levels – the places where action really takes place. Certainly for the issues we will consider over the next two weeks – water, sanitation, and human settlements – this is where we must focus our attention. It’s the work of local actors – individuals, villages, and municipalities – that will solve these issues.

I would like to suggest four themes worthy of our attention. First, as agreed at Monterrey, each country is responsible for promoting the economic and political freedoms that establish an enabling environment and foster local action, growth and development. Where countries have committed to investing in their people and institutions, donors and international organizations should assist them. There are common elements to successful sustainable development – domestic good governance, rule of law, economic reform, engaging the private sector, and sound policies. Our challenge now is to work country-by-country to translate these common elements into results that expand the circle of development.

Second, we need to build capacity, locally and nationally. Capacity building must include efforts to enable individuals, communities, and municipalities to participate actively in identifying and meeting their own needs, as well as mobilizing resources.

Third, we need to harness the power of public-private partnerships to continue delivering results. Partnerships provide flexible ways of bringing together the strengths and capabilities of governments, civil society, and the private sector. Partnerships may also require that we adapt our way of doing business. For

example, the first-ever "International Forum on Sustainable Development Partnerships," hosted by the Italian government last month in Rome, began a public, transparent discussion of partnership activities in a variety of sectors. We may need to experiment with other ways to discuss, learn from, and expand partnership efforts. I am encouraged, though, that here at CSD 12, both the Partnerships Fair and the Learning Center are oversubscribed with interested participants.

Finally, we need to build on what works. To achieve internationally agreed goals on water, sanitation, and human settlements, we need to find ways to broaden and multiply our efforts by disseminating best practices and replicating proven approaches so that local actors can use them to meet growing demands.

Mr. Chairman, the United States trusts that, with your leadership, the next two weeks will enable us to identify barriers to implementation, find practical approaches to overcome those barriers, strengthen and develop partnerships, and provide capacity building that will strengthen the "infrastructure" for sustainable development, both in terms of the institutional framework or "software," as well as on-the-ground "hardware." We look forward to sharing our own experiences and to learning from others. Thank you.