

České předsednictví  
v Radě EU

Czech Presidency  
of the Council of the EU

Présidence tchèque  
du Conseil de l'UE

2009

**Commission on Sustainable Development**  
**17<sup>th</sup> Session**  
**High-level Segment**  
**13 – 15 May 2009**

**Opening statement**  
**on behalf of the European Union**  
**by**

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**Head of Delegation**

**New York, May 13, 2009**



Madam Chairperson,  
Secretary General of the United Nations,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its twenty-seven Member States.

We are facing **multiple crises concerning the economy, the financial markets, food security, climate, water, biodiversity, and energy**. These are closely interlinked and require long-term, sustainable responses. CSD is a unique forum in which to do this.

**Extraordinary situations require innovative and dynamic approaches.** The EU, therefore, welcomes the interactive and inclusive format of the dialogues with key stakeholders, the roundtables in the High-level Segment and their summing up in the "Shared Vision". The EU believes that the "Shared Vision" will greatly benefit from the **innovative spirit of CSD-17**.

Let me now **highlight issues within the thematic focus of CSD-17**, to which the EU attaches great importance.

First and foremost, **agriculture** must be sustainable so that **global food security as well as food quality and safety** are assured in the long term. To this end, the EU supports the establishment of the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition. We need to ensure **sustainable management of natural resources, sustainable use of pesticides and fertilizers**; to use **more environment-friendly management techniques**, including organic farming; to ensure the **sustainable production of bioenergy** through sustainability criteria and to design efficient **frameworks for land tenure, use and management**, including securing equitable access to land. To this end, international guidelines for sustainable agricultural production might be needed.

The sustainable use of **ecosystem services** is an important message that has to come out of this CSD. It is also the best way to strengthen the resilience of ecosystems to the inevitable **impacts of climate change**. Agriculture is the prime user of water and soils and needs to contribute to saving increasingly scarce water resources, and prevent soil degradation and biodiversity loss. By adopting sustainable agriculture practices, such as water savings, soil conservation, and energy efficient production methods, we can contribute to both adaptation and mitigation and thereby ensure long-term food security.

Furthermore, it is important to support the implementation of **Integrated Water Resource Management** principles, including at transboundary level; to enhance natural disaster risk management and **drought preparedness**; to **reduce desertification and land degradation** in affected countries by accomplishing the ambitious objectives of the UNCCD Ten-Year Strategic Plan.

Special attention should be paid to the challenges faced by **Small Island Developing States** in terms of sustainable development, including their vulnerability to climate change, and to the advancement of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

From the perspective of **rural development**, it is necessary to support **non-agricultural activities** in order to diversify the rural economy and to improve quality of life in rural areas, within the framework of rural development policies. An integral and significant part of a balanced rural development is **sustainable forest management**, which respects the multifunctional role of forests, and **sustainable tourism**.

The **working conditions of farmers and agricultural workers** also deserve attention with a focus on decent work. In this context, we should continue to promote the

**empowerment of women and youth**, and of **vulnerable groups**, such as children, indigenous peoples and small-holders.

We need to address **poverty and hunger eradication**. In this context, **Africa and its agriculture** require priority attention of the international community. Agriculture has a key role in development. Investment in agriculture must be based on principles of sustainability so that the agricultural development does not cause irreversible environmental damage. It is essential to improve **access to existing markets** and to develop new markets for value-added agricultural products, and to support regional integration processes. We hope that the concept of "Sustainable Green Revolution in Africa" will contribute to those purposes.

A more **coordinated and coherent approach** of national stakeholders as well as of the donor community, UN bodies, in particular FAO, UNDP, WFP, UNEP, UN Habitat, ILO, UNESCO, and of international financial institutions is needed for delivering substantial results in order to meet the **Millennium Development Goals especially in Africa**. For its part, the **EU will continue to cooperate intensively with Africa**, particularly through the Joint Africa-EU Strategic Partnership. The EU as a major official development assistance donor is already committed to greater cooperation and to increasing volume of aid.

It is the EU firm conviction that the major global challenges demonstrate again the absolute need to **integrate social and environmental considerations as well as governance aspects into economic recovery plans**. This will require to **boost the move towards a green economy**, which properly reflects sustainable agriculture, rural development and land management, and to **stimulate the development of innovative environmentally sound technologies** and to **change unsustainable consumption and production patterns**. **Research and development, education** and sharing best practices will need to be supported to achieve this goal.

We need to accelerate the **achievement of the Millennium Development Goals** and devote **special attention to Africa, Least Developed Countries, Land-locked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States**.

To conclude, please let me also emphasize that the difficult situation the world is facing today provides us with a powerful reminder of the utmost importance of **multilateralism**. While we may not always agree on the most appropriate responses to the crises, we should be unanimous in recognizing that we cannot deal with these crises only at national or regional level. We can only do so if the response is also global. CSD is a central process in this endeavour. This puts us all under an obligation to deliver concrete results. We must all strive to make CSD-17 a success.

Thank you for your attention.