

**Remarks by Mr Rudolph S. Kuuzegh, Director, Ministry of  
Environment Science and Technology at the Intergovernmental  
Preparatory Meeting of CSD-17, New YOK, 23 – 27 February 2009**

Thank you Madam Chair,

Madam Chair, since this is the first opportunity that my delegation has to contribute to this debate I would like to congratulate you and the Bureau members for the able manner in which you have handled the affairs of this session so far.

My Delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by Sudan on behalf of G77 and China. The panel discussions this morning were useful in putting the issues of land in right perspective for our deliberations.

Madam Chair, Ghana endorses calls made by other delegations for a discussion on the nexus between climate change and land and its implication for sustainable development during the Summit on climate change to be held on the eve of the 64<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly.

My Delegation is convinced that our ability to address the issue of land tenure marks the starting point for addressing all the other issues under this cluster for the implementation of the JPoI. In an agrarian economy, such as that of Ghana, Sustainable Land Management (SLM) is a prerequisite for an enhanced production, food security, incomes and livelihoods for its present and future generations and maintenance of ecosystem integrity.

As a major environmental asset, land, including forest, wildlife, wetland and water resources, contributes to the provision, maintenance and regulation of critical ecosystem functions. It provides habitat for bio-diverse species, supports nutrient cycling, contributes to the provision of food, fresh water and wood, and helps regulate climate and floods. However land degradation continues to be a major threat to the estimated 150,000km<sup>2</sup> agricultural land which is about 63% of the total land area of Ghana. Indeed, land degradation has since the 1990s become a major developmental issue in terms of its impacts on poverty alleviation, food security and economic growth.

Land degradation, desertification and soil erosion hit hardest at the local level and those most affected are the poor, especially women who depend on natural resources for their survival. Activities (mostly extractive in nature) of women in particular e.g. fuel wood extraction, are strongly affected by environmental degradation.

With the continuing degradation of land resources and with no signs of abatement, the need for a comprehensive approach to dealing with land degradation has become even more important. A well developed strategy aimed at addressing the root causes of land degradation and removal of barriers to up-scaling of land management activities provides a good opportunity for enhancing the rate of development of severely affected areas within Ghana.

Under current land reforms in Ghana, we have found it absolutely beneficial to foster collaboration between land related agencies and the benefits have been enormous. There is therefore the need for sector agencies to work in consistent ways that give equitable access to land as far as domestic law and other institutional arrangements will permit. Particularly, it has been useful to incorporate gender perspectives to land reforms. There has also been the need to re-organize the sharing of benefits accruing from land held in common by communities and land held in trust by Government for some sections of the population.

The on-going land reforms have therefore given some leverage for land to be gainfully employed in other sectors of the economy such as agriculture.

Madam Chair, Ghana welcomes support from development partners to see these land reforms go through successfully. Ghana also seeks support from development partners in the form of technical assistance to implement its sustainable land management programme.

I thank you, Madam Chair