

*MGD Discussion: Meeting the MDGs related to water, sanitation and human settlements' targets*

Finland: Ms. Paula Lehtomäki, Minister for Trade and Development

Madam Chair,

Poverty reduction, achievement of the MDGs and sustainable development are high on the agenda of the Finnish Development Policy. Water, sanitation and human settlements play a crucial role within this context.

We believe that for long term effects the policies and programs have to be recipient-country owned. There we seem to have a problem: while analysing the PRSPs of our partner countries and proposals for assistance, we have recognized that environment, including support to water, sanitation and human settlements, are not considered as corner-stones of poverty reduction. We consider it extremely important that the PRSPs will take fully into account environmental issues, and we are ready to give assistance in this work.

Economic growth that ignores environmental implications is simply not sustainable. Support to environment is important for achieving the MDGs. It is also important from growth and competitiveness points of view. I would like to use the experiences of Finland in this respect:

Finland has got high rankings both in competitiveness and sustainability surveys.

This provides evidence that solid environmental and social performance is not only consistent with but, indeed, contributes to overall economic competitiveness.

Competitiveness that is grounded on eco-efficiency, eco-innovation and the development of environmental technologies makes sound business sense.

Chair,

I would like to draw your attention to the importance of cross-cutting issues in planning and managing water and sanitation services and human settlements. Good governance, sensitiveness to consumption and production patterns, gender sensitiveness and education are key issues in this respect. Further, in the provision of basic services to the poor, one has to adopt a rights-based approach. The poor have limited resources to cover the costs of services. Community participation is thus crucial for planning, implementation and management of services, because it would facilitate the concerns of local population to be included into the project design.

Finally, Chair,

Our expectations regarding the outcome of this meeting are:

The conclusions should clearly present key political priorities for action to facilitate the targets for water supply, sanitation and human settlements to be achieved as anticipated.

The conclusions should also include an effective follow-up and monitoring system; answer to the question of HOW we proceed in practice and a clear understanding of interlinkages between water, sanitation and human settlements, the role and importance of cross-cutting issues as well as links between water, sanitation and human settlements for achieving the MDGs.

I think that CSD13 should send a clear message to the Millennium Review Summit, pointing out that environmental sustainability underpins the achievement of all MDGs and Johannesburg commitments and is crucial to escape the poverty trap.

Thank you.