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**On the occasion of the opening of the
High Level Segment
13th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development**

Statement by

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and the Environment**

Turning Political Commitment into Action

**United Nations
New York, 20 April 2005**

Mr. Chairperson, distinguished delegates:

- There are four major messages that I feel should be passed on from the CSD to the Millennium Review Summit later this year. They can all be found in the report of the High Level Panel on Threats and Challenges and the Millennium Project Report in the context of environment and sustainable development.
- **The first message is that conservation of the environment is crucial for achieving development goals.** This is certainly evident for the current CSD cycle. We can halve the number of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation only if progress is made on MDG7, environmental sustainability. By the same token, making progress on water and sanitation will help us achieve environmental sustainability. It will also have positive trickle-down effects on virtually all the MDGs, including maternal health, child mortality, poverty, gender equality, fighting disease and, of course, improving the lives of slum dwellers. CSD 13 should underline this message and convey it to the Millennium Review Summit in September 2005.
- **The second message is that failing to protect the environment undermines poverty reduction and public health - the health of women and children in particular - and jeopardises peace, security and stability.** In order to meet these challenges and avoid threats that could arise if adequate action is not taken, it is essential to achieve the WSSD goals and MDGs. Developed countries should take measures at national level that reflect their shared responsibility for tackling global "security" issues. Promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns is a crucial challenge for all countries. But developed countries have special responsibilities: for example, their contribution to the Millennium Review Summit and its follow-up, fulfilling multilateral environmental agreements, with climate change and biodiversity loss as key "security" issues, and living up to the MDG8 commitments in order to develop a global partnership.

- **The third message is that a coherent strategy for tackling environmental problems and eradicating poverty and illness will benefit sustainable development.** This is why the MDG follow-up needs to generate synergy between the MDGs and the WSSD goals. The WSSD goals cover chemicals, water supply and sanitation, depleted fish stocks and sustainable fishery, energy, biodiversity, and natural resources and were formulated in close conjunction with the MDGs. Synergy should also be generated with the ten-year framework of programmes for sustainable consumption and production. To this end, clear linkages need to be forged between the WSSD goals on the Road Map for implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The MDG follow-up should focus on all the pillars of sustainable development, and clearly acknowledge the environmental underpinning of all MDGs. One challenge that must be addressed coherently is how to ensure that sustainable water management and a healthy environment can co-exist with the considerable growth in agricultural production needed to feed an increasing world population. The Conference on Water for Food and Ecosystems, held in the Netherlands last January, worked out ways to strike a new balance between water for human consumption, water for food production and water for a healthy ecosystem.
- **The fourth message I would like to bring to your attention is the necessity to better incorporate energy issues in the Millennium Development Goals.** Last December we organised the Energy for Development Conference in Noordwijk. My colleague Agnes van Ardenne, Minister for Development Cooperation, and I chaired that Conference, which was organised together with the World Bank, UNDP and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. One important conclusion that the delegates agreed on was that energy must remain high on the development agenda. To achieve that, energy must be more explicitly embedded in the Millennium Development Goals and in national policy programmes in developing countries, including poverty reduction strategies. Once again I would like to make a plea for coherent strategies. For example, in order to pump drinking water or operate sanitation facilities, there has to be an energy supply to operate the equipment.
- Responding to the four messages I have just conveyed will not come cheap. Major investment is needed. The Millennium Project Report recommends a substantial increase in investment in a range of basic services, such as safe drinking water and basic sanitation, sustainable energy - including renewable energy and electricity -

safe cooking fuels, adequate shelter, sustainable and affordable public transport, conservation and sustainable management of the natural environment. To help expedite the concrete implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the Netherlands has set national targets for its contribution. Our country has undertaken to do what is needed to facilitate access to safe drinking water and sanitation for 50 million people. That includes providing social and economic services, targeted at the poorest countries, mainly in Africa. Our development minister, Agnes van Ardenne, wants to deploy every available instrument to achieve this goal, including bilateral cooperation, partnerships with UN entities and International Financial Institutions, and partnerships with the private sector. To live up to the energy commitments it made at the WSSD, the Netherlands adopted a national goal to provide sustainable and modern energy services to 10 million people, especially in Africa.

The CSD's role in relation to the Millennium Development Goals is clear. All the major thematic areas covered by the CSD's first three cycles are important for reaching the Millennium Development Goals. The CSD should therefore take substantial and concrete steps to bring about the required investment in these areas. This will forge a solid link between the WSSD agenda and the MDG agenda. Obviously, the CSD must deliver on commitments that have already been made and commit to policies and actions that add value to the implementation of the JPoI and MDGs. To that end, it is essential to clearly identify the action owners and implementation leaders in each policy year. It might be worthwhile to make a distinction between actions for all countries, actions where individual "lead countries or champions" could take the lead in coordinating implementation, and actions where UN agencies or IFIs need to deliver on their mandate. In this respect UNDP, UNEP and IFIs should take a much more active part in the CSD cycle. The Commission for Sustainable Development should do more to coordinate the process and to get the other actors more closely involved and stimulate the participation of all major groups - especially women and youth. This could help prevent crucial issues being systematically overlooked in national strategies. These issues include safe drinking water and basic sanitation; energy, including electricity and safe cooking; adequate shelter and a sustainably managed and conserved natural environment. Investment in these areas is essential in the MDG follow-up.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.