



# **BELGIUM**

**HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE  
THIRTEENTH SESSION  
OF THE COMMISSION ON  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**New York, 21 April, 2005**

**STATEMENT  
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Mr. President,  
Excellencies,

There is a growing number of countries that have decided to charge a Minister explicitly with a portfolio for Sustainable Development. Belgium has decided ever since 1999 to be one of them. And I am glad to be able to attend here at the first opportunity since I have been appointed to this function, even more because this is an important CSD-session. In addition to the EU-Presidency's intervention I would like to contribute by highlighting the following.

Belgium attaches great importance to adopting and consecutively meeting internationally agreed steps forward on sustainable development. In 1997, we were among the first countries to adopt a legal strategic framework for sustainable development at the federal level. This federal strategy establishes a strategic process of consecutive cycles of reporting, planning, consulting, implementing and monitoring with a view to developing federal measures to implement sustainable development. Since September 2004 Belgium is in the second cycle of this strategy by implementing its second federal plan for sustainable development, which contains a true international inspiration and orientation.

In the same spirit, our regions work together with other sub-national regions of the world within the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development, also called NRG4SD, to achieve sustainable development through cooperation and exchanging experiences and best practices.

#### Multi-level and inter-level action. international cooperation

Belgium is deeply convinced that a steering and framing Sustainable Development policy-framework is fundamental and necessary for all actions to be taken by all stakeholders and governmental actors to reach the agreed international goals. And initiatives to interlink the pillars of sustainable development are indeed taken in the Belgian Regions and Communities and at the federal level, as well as by the local authorities.

Still, continuously improving and updating our approach is what we look for. We identified that it is vital to optimally coordinate all actions taken by our federal and regional levels of government in an effective and ambitious way, thereby using our federal multi-level government-system to its full potential. And we have taken up this challenge! We are thus presently working on the elaboration of our additional national or intergovernmental response to the 2005 commitment of Johannesburg. Synergies, opportunities and added-value of a coherent SD-policy are key words in this NSDS. The cooperation between the federal and the regional governments, the local authorities and all other stakeholders in this exercise is ensured.

In striving for better, it is logical to keep our own actions connected with the CSD-sessions and other international fora. On the other hand, it is self-evident that we look at what's happening abroad. Sharing experiences with other countries on their development of national strategies and their SD-policy process is considered vital. Our first experiences in the peer reviewing process with France, the UK, Ghana and Mauritius are very positive, inter alia because of the usefulness of its methodology for others and

of its recommendations. These experiences form a good basis for future work in this group and for deepening the North-South-dimension of this exercise. In line with this, we plan to present our NSDS to the peers. Summarizing, reaching sustainable development necessitates the co-responsibility of all levels of government.

#### Social dimension and cross-cutting issues

Being also in charge of Social Economy, I am also very specifically aware of the importance of the social and the North-South-dimension in SD-policy making. With respect to this I have a feeling of urgency because environmental sustainability is also vital to important facets of social development, be it poverty eradication, health, education or gender equality. The inter-linkages of SD-actions for reaching the MDG's must therefore be central to all our actions. Also this CSD must therefore, with the upcoming Millennium Review Summit, address this issue and contribute in a strong manner to the Summit. Close interaction between sustainable development and development, not excluding innovative proposals for financing, is of high importance. The federal parliament underlined this a week ago by agreeing that access to water is a fundamental right.

In meeting this objective of systematically interlinking, we would like to highlight 3 cross-cutting issues in particular. Gender equality and education for sustainable development are not only accelerators by contributing strongly to the creation of better living conditions for many people but also by spreading sustainable development to many citizens as a conviction, a way of working and life. Contributing to changing unsustainable production and consumption patterns via specific actions or by the mentioned cross-cutting issues is ultimately vital to overcome the key obstacles mentioned in the analysis of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. At the Ostend Sustainable Production and Consumption Regional Stakeholders Meeting and at the Vilnius High Level Meeting on Education for Sustainable Development we demonstrated that we strongly believe in the mobilizing role of these themes in contributing to a real partnership between governments, stakeholders and all individual citizens to safeguard a right future for our planet. We will continue to do so.

At this moment brochures about the second federal sustainable development plan are being distributed. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Thank you.

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