

THE PERMANENT MISSION OF
SOUTH AFRICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

333 East 38th Street
9th Floor
New York, NY 10016
Tel: (212) 213-5583
Fax: (212) 692-2498
[E-mail: soafun@worldnet.att.net](mailto:soafun@worldnet.att.net)

**Thirteenth Session of the United Nations Commission for Sustainable
Development**

Statement to the High Level Segment
By
H.E. Marthinus Van Schalkwyk
Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism

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**STATEMENT BY MINISTER MARTHINUS VAN SCHALKWYK, MINISTER OF
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TOURISM, SOUTH AFRICA**

13th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,

NEW YORK, 20 APRIL 2005

HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT: "FROM POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO ACTION"

Chairman,

At the outset let me congratulate you on your leadership and that of the Bureau of this 13th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

The South African delegation associates itself with the statement made by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

CSD 13 is a significant meeting. It is the first substantive policy session under the Commission's new work cycle. It is our responsibility here at CSD 13, to adopt policy decisions that will expedite implementation of the thematic targets, set in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation on water, sanitation and human settlements, as well as on the cross-cutting issues identified at CSD 11. In the next three days, we must clearly pronounce on how we are going to move to real action that will enable us to meet the goals and targets in the thematic cluster.

At the end of this session we must be in a position to deliver a clear message to the upcoming 5 year review of the Millennium Declaration.

Mr Chairman

The global challenge of poverty eradication remains. We are, however, continually reminded that practical solutions to the development challenges of Africa and the developing world must be found. We have seen substantial progress in developing countries in establishing the conditions necessary for achieving the targets of the JPOI. Without action on critical issues that are the means of implementation, such as finance, market access, investment, technology as well as

Investment in good governance at national and international level, many countries will simply be unable to meet the targets. We, in the developing world, will find ourselves failing in our pledges to improve the quality of life of the people that do not have access to the basic services that millions in the developed world simply take for granted.

In Africa, significant progress has been made. NEPAD sets the framework for economic growth and sustainable development in our continent. The past few years have seen improved economic growth rates. The establishment of coordinating bodies such as the African Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW), the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD), the African Water Facility hosted by the African Development Bank and a host of other mechanisms, are testimony to the commitment of African governments' to action on the water, sanitation and human settlement targets of the JPOI. In addition, since human settlements provide the locale for the expansion of access to water, sanitation and other services and infrastructure such as transport, education and health, steps have been taken to ensure the appropriate coordination at the political level. This, then places human settlements in their right context as the setting for the implementation of decisions, actions and programmes for sustainable development. We hope that this arrangement will permeate into the work of CSD.

Through these mechanisms Africa has the ability to use additional aid productively to make the necessary progress towards ending poverty. This capacity could be improved even further if the policies of our development partners become more supportive of these efforts. Therefore, Africa needs concrete financial and technical support. Progress in many parts of the continent towards achieving the targets of the Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation remains slow. On present trends, many of the targets will not be met.

We call on our developed country partners:

- to fulfill ODA and other financing commitments made at Monterrey
- to relax as a matter of policy, the conditionalities in financing programmes to achieve the targets of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and to adopt a "learning by doing" approach.

- to replenish, synergize and capitalize the various global and regional funds and facilities including the Global Poverty Fund and
- to transform policies of international financial institutions so that they are supportive of the needs of developing countries

Financing development too often comes at our own expense. Foreign currency debt, market constraints and markets structured to reduce prices of our commodities foster dependence by preventing us from using our income to build infrastructure and provide sufficient social services.

Action is needed urgently, to enhance market access, to reduce agricultural subsidies and to register progress in the Hong Kong Ministerial Meeting of the Doha Development Round of the WTO.

The crippling burden of debt is reversing any positive impact of ODA and FDI efforts. **Action is needed urgently**, through measures such as debt relief, debt cancellation and other innovative mechanisms geared to comprehensively address the debt problems of developing countries, in particular the poorest and most heavily indebted ones. Advances in science, technology and innovation are crucial for achieving the long term goals of sustainable development. Monitoring and evaluation systems must be strengthened and capacity developed in data management, analysis and narratives to demonstrate impact on poverty eradication,

Mr Chairman

On the thematic issues of water, sanitation and human settlements, allow me to highlight what I believe are some of the priorities.

In the area of Human settlements, in light of the estimates concerning the rapid urbanization of African cities and towns, we must aim to establish a global slum upgrading target that is both realistic and indicates urgency. The international community needs to set an ambitious global target to halve the proportion of people living in slums by 2020. It is within the overall context of human settlements that we are able to measure essential quality of life issues - such as access to

water and sanitation. It requires intergovernmental co-ordination and the necessary institutional agreements to ensure oversight of these outcomes.

The target for delivering on integrated water resource management plans is upon us. Where the target has been met, finance and capacity for implementation needs to be prioritized. In other areas, support is needed urgently for the finalization of these plans.

Provision of sanitation is a critical issue for human dignity, and needs to be prioritized at all levels to accelerate access to sanitation services, and co-ordinated with health and hygiene programmes.

Considering water scarcity, especially in Africa, there is a need for innovative solutions for dealing with waste-water treatment and reuse. Policy measures are needed to stimulate further research and development in this area.

Mr Chairman

Governments alone cannot deliver on the Johannesburg targets. Partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations are an essential ingredient. We welcome the steps that have been taken to ensure that the voices of major groups will influence the final outcome of CSD 13.

To achieve co-ordination at international level on water and sanitation, UN Water needs to be strengthened. In the human settlements arena, the work of UN HABITAT in placing the plight of slum dwellers on the international agenda is welcomed, and needs to be further supported.

We also welcome the recommendations in the Secretary General's report, "In Larger Freedom", to reform ECOSOC so that it can effectively assess progress in the UN's development agenda, and provide direction for the efforts of the various social and economic intergovernmental bodies of the UN.

Finally Mr Chairman,

There is a need to ensure an effective monitoring system of the CSD 13 thematic cluster after this session. In this respect, we are in full support of the G77 proposal to use a part of the

Intergovernmental Preparatory Meetings to review progress on the thematic clusters that have already been addressed by the Commission.

I thank you.