

## **Opening statement**

### **Business & Industry Major Group**

#### **to the Commission on Sustainable Development 17**

**February 23, 2009**

Madam Chairperson, Your Excellence, and Ladies and Gentlemen.

Business and Industry welcomes this opportunity to prioritize and strengthen co-operative and integrated action on discuss the issues of sustainable development. I am Dr. Arlin Bostian, Senior Vice President for Research and Development and Global Sustainability Officer at Bayer CropScience.

The global population has almost tripled since 1950. By 2030, there will be 1.7 billion more mouths to feed. The ratio of arable land to population is expected to decline by 40-55% by 2030. By 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living with absolute water scarcity. The basic livelihoods of tens of millions more will be threatened by a extreme and variable climate.

There is no one single tool or policy to ensure sustainability in these circumstances; the Commission on Sustainable Development should enable a

wide range of policy, market and voluntary measures and approaches.

Prioritizing flexible approaches will be more important than ever as governments and the private sector cope with recent economic downturn.

Food and agricultural commodities chains are increasingly global and comprised of many different stages and players, including farmers, manufacturers, suppliers, transport, retailers, consumers and waste managers, all of whom generate different environmental impacts. Sustainability in food and renewable commodities chains therefore requires shared responsibility and engagement among all those involved along their life-cycles.

The private sector brings expertise and capacity to the table, and has been a key force in innovation in the past century. But to ensure the innovations and knowledge match the needs of local situations, we need partnerships across sectors, with other stakeholders such as government agencies, academics, and development organisations. We are all stakeholders and previous experiences have shown, when programmes undermine local entrepreneurs, they often fail to achieve their goals. But when they support and foster initiative and skill building, successes are often longer lasting and widespread.

To this end, business and industry has assembled a call to action together with two other major groups. *Farming First* is about building a broad based, knowledge and farmer-centred approach to sustainable development through agriculture. Action is needed in six key areas:

**Safeguarding natural resources** - furthering widespread adoption of sustainable practices of water and land use, such as conservation technology.

**Sharing knowledge** - while much knowledge to improve global agriculture already exists it often does not reach those farmers who could benefit most. Programs like village-based knowledge centre help.

**Building local access** - fundamental resources should be available to farmers to help them manage their production process more reliably, including mechanical tools, seed, fertilizer, and crop protection.

**Protecting harvest** - in many of the poorest countries, 20-40% of crop yields are lost because of inadequate pre- and post-harvest support. Likewise, vast quantities of food are squandered during production and consumption phases of the food chain.

**Enable access to markets** - farmers need to be able to get their products to market and receive equitable price treatment when they do by getting information like up-to-date market pricing even in remote areas.

**Prioritise research imperatives** - achieving sustainable agriculture requires intensified, continuous research, prioritising locally relevant crops, stewardship techniques, and adaptation to climate change.

With modern agriculture, farmers have doubled the production of world food calories since 1960, tripled the output of foods such as cooking oils and meats and increased per-capita food supplies in the developing world by 25%. And we've maintained a stable area of agricultural land since 1950, despite a population growth that has more than doubled.

Still, there is a great deal more to be done and science is part of the solution. Future rises in food prices will be exacerbated without the techniques and technologies we have now to increase production being applied more sustainably in all regions. Plus we need to continue developing new

technologies to further food production and rural development in an environmentally-responsible, socially-sensitive manner.

We hope you will join us in the delegates dining room tomorrow over lunch for round table sessions to discuss the six action areas. Thank you Madam Chairperson.