



Statement by Nadia M. Osman
Minister Plenipotentiary
Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Sudan to the UN,
on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, during the Intergovernmental Preparatory
Meeting of Seventeenth Session of the UN Commission
on Sustainable Development (CSD-17): Agriculture
New York, 24 February 2009

Madam Chair,

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on this vital theme of agriculture. Madam Chair, once again please be assured of the fullest support and cooperation of the Group in the execution of your duties. We are confident that under your able stewardship, CSD-17 will achieve a positive outcome.

2. We would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the reports he produced as a background for this session which will help guide our deliberations. We also thank the panelists for their insightful presentations.

3. This session has gained the status of an extraordinary session because of its unique timing. The thematic discussion on Agriculture of particular importance given the vital role that this sector plays in addressing food security, eradicating poverty and hunger, achieving sustainable development, and the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, particularly in developing countries.

4. The discussions on agriculture, as well as the other thematic issues, should be undertaken within the context of sustainable development, emphasizing the three pillars - economic development, social development and environmental protection - which are mutually reinforcing and interrelated. The six thematic clusters to be discussed at CSD-17 represent the critical building blocks to addressing the changing global food economy and food crisis. Ultimately, global food security is the objective driving our efforts. Those six cluster issues, given their inter-linkages, must therefore be addressed in an integrated and balanced manner.

Madam Chair,

5. Agriculture merits particular attention as it represents the nucleus of global food security. Without agriculture's development, the 824 millions that are food insecure or chronically hungry will not be reduced.

6. As we had seen during the CSD Review Session last year, the challenges facing the agriculture sector are many, particularly for developing countries. It requires that we act in a decisive and comprehensive manner. Restricted market access, distorting subsidies in developed countries, population growth, land degradation, desertification, water management, lack of investments, poor infra structure, to name a few. urbanization and the expansion of cities as well as climate change impacts and natural disasters are some of the challenges faced by developing countries in developing their agriculture sector

7. This profound neglect of the agriculture sector has marginalized and destroyed smallholder farmers' livelihoods in developing countries. The recent food crisis speaks to the need for sustained international cooperation, to ensure global food security. Prompt coordinated global action by governments, donors and multilateral agencies is imperative in order to make good the decades-old promise to end hunger and to prevent another global crisis.

8. Despite universal recognition that agricultural development is absolutely fundamental to poverty eradication and overall development, too few global initiatives designed to accomplish that goal have been consistently supported. Agriculture has been left on the margins of the development process.

9. The time has therefore come for a major paradigm shift in the form of sustainable green revolution to achieve global food security. There is an urgent need to improve agricultural output globally. This has been made more urgent with financial and economic crises the likes of which has not been seen since the 1930s.

10. The international community must support the adoption of appropriate policies and strategies by developing countries. Developing countries should be given assistance to create the structures necessary to make their agriculture sectors competitive in an open trade environment and one that is sustainable. This would include the provision of technical and financial assistance, capacity building, investment on infrastructure, especially for Africa, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS given their own peculiar challenges and vulnerabilities.

11. There should be strong commitment at all levels to increase investment substantially. Developing countries should have capacity-building support so they can create an appropriate investment climate that would facilitate investment in agricultural and rural infrastructure. The development of infrastructure for agriculture and the rural sector should be treated as a priority area for such investment.

Madam Chair,

12. The food crisis requires us to move more swiftly at the national and international levels. International assistance for social safety nets in developing countries must be ensured. Comprehensive, systematic and effective national and global measures must be established and implemented in response to the global food crisis. There should therefore be a reference guide for rapid responses at the national and international levels.

13. Taking lesson learned from recent global food crisis, stronger assessment, monitoring and surveillance system are needed to prevent the reoccurrence of crisis. There should be a global mechanism in operation to serve as an early warning system on food security.

14. Beyond the crisis, there is need to enhance agricultural productivity and promote sustainable agricultural practices, which will necessitate financial and technical support for research into appropriate and climate sensitive technologies. Scientific research must lead to new adaptable varieties of seeds as well as refined cropping and production systems to cope with current agricultural challenges.

15. However, increasing food production alone will not suffice in achieving food security. The problem at the root of food crises is also the access and distribution of food. We should focus our policies at the national and international level to improve production and strengthen the capacity of the people to have an access to food, especially for the poor and most vulnerable in developing countries.

16. In dealing with climate change, steps must be taken to minimize its impact on agriculture. Extreme variations in weather patterns caused by climate change must not continue to have a devastating impact on food production. Developing countries must therefore be adequately equipped with the financial and technological means to fully implement adaptation measures. At the same time, sustainable agriculture practices that contribute to climate change mitigation should be encouraged. In addressing these challenges, developing countries should be supported by financial assistance, capacity building and technology transfer from our development partners.

17. Challenges and opportunities presented by the biofuels must be mutually reinforcing to the global food security, energy needs and sustainable development objectives. Bio-fuel production should be undertaken in accordance with the three pillars of sustainable development. For this reason, continued research into bio-energy fuel must be encouraged including through South-South cooperation.

18. The United Nations system is urged to provide practical support to developing countries in agricultural diversification, alternative uses for crops, improved husbandry, irrigation and water management, aquaculture and the use of appropriate modern technologies by smallholding farmers. That assistance should extend to agricultural extension services as well as strategies to gain developed market access. Smallholding farmers in developing countries should be equipped with the knowledge to have better access to financial and risk management instruments.

19. The involvement of multi-stakeholders, including the private sector and the participation of woman, should be devoted to supporting efforts to attain a sustainable global platform for food security. In keeping with this goal, initiatives by the private sector and the research community must be interlinked to intensify research and development so that production systems can be improved. Private and public financial institutions should increase their allocation portfolios to finance agricultural production, especially in developing countries.

Madam Chair,

20. In a similar manner, agriculture's share of ODA should be increased with increases in new aid, which should be the main engine driving investment in agricultural infrastructure. Grants, concessional loans and other forms of investment in agriculture should become integral parts of the global blueprint to achieve agricultural development.

21. There is also an obvious need to rebalance international agriculture trade rules. Trade distorting subsidies by developed countries should be eliminated, thus creating the environment needed for growth in the agricultural output of smallholding farmers and improving their prospects for regional and international trade. There is also the need for developing countries to have access to agricultural safeguard mechanism to protect small

resource poor farmers from import surges that disturb domestic markets. There should be a strong political will to break the six-year impasse preventing the completion of WTO negotiations on agriculture. In this context, a breakthrough in agricultural negotiations as part of the Doha Development Round is deemed crucial.

22. A 21st century green revolution based on sustainable agricultural practices of small farmers in developing countries needs to be launched. This second revolution, which should be coupled with improved access to food, should aim to benefit all regions, especially Africa, and small farmers in developing countries if we want to achieve our target to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by half in 2015.

I thank you.