

## INTEGRATED STATEMENT ON LAND AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

25 FEBRUARY 2009

Chairperson, the South African delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made by Sudan on behalf of the G77 and China. We thank the panellists for the well researched and thought provoking inputs.

In most developing countries rural development is an overarching theme on which land reform, water, housing, agriculture etc are hanging.

Rural development and access to land and land tenure security are central to measures to attain the internationally agreed poverty reduction targets outlined in the Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. African countries are mostly natural resource based economies and land is therefore integral to achieving sustainable development.

In this context South Africa recommends the following key policy options on the thematic area of **land**:

- Agree with panelists on customary land management practices. Access to land and security of tenure must be based on the principles of good governance, including recognizing the status of women, and require strong institutional capacity
- Support is needed for the **implementation of policies that are pro-poor and that strengthen the land rights** of the poor and vulnerable groups whilst ensuring that people use land resources in a sustainable manner

- Efforts to formalize and secure land rights must be supported by policies that strengthen these rights, with **programmes that enable productive and sustainable use and management of land**, including strengthening of land use planning and administration systems, in a manner that balances multiple land uses with environmental considerations and promotion of food security.
- **Increased long term capacity-building strategies** that promote deployment and use of new and appropriate technologies for sustainable land management are necessary to address land degradation. This comes at considerable cost for many African countries, and this challenge must be addressed.
- Importance of balancing of demand of land for urban development and that for agriculture and food production must be considered.
- Land and agrarian reform should be aligned with water allocation reform to ensure that land access also includes water rights. Water is key to the optimal productive use of land.

In respect of promoting **rural development**, key policy options include:

- **Investment in infrastructure like** telecommunications, rural roads, transport networks, water, sanitation, housing, energy supply and social amenities, including schools and health facilities. This requires integrated policy planning including disaster management planning and **differentiated implementation strategies and plans**.
- **Inter-generational poverty must be addressed**, through increasing support for the development and implementation of **policies and responsive strategies** that address poverty and rural development (i.e.

anti-poverty strategies), and ensuring that the poor graduate from depending on social security to creating employment.

- Support is needed for initiatives that promote economic **assets and entrepreneurial skills. These must include** land, technology transfer and building capacity of rural communities so that they can take charge of their own destiny.
- **Support is needed for initiatives that provide employment opportunities** through labour intensive approaches in providing basic and bulk infrastructure while ensuring the protection of biodiversity and soils.
- In this regard, South Africa is already implementing the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).
- **Partnerships** at national, regional and international levels, involving private sector, governments and communities, are key to land reform and rural development.
- **Local government must play a key role** in rural development, and support is needed to enable this sphere of government to operate effectively on these.
- **Support is needed for efforts to promote appropriate education, training and skills development programmes, that match local opportunities, and thus contribute to promotion of employment creation.**
- **Infrastructure, including road networks,** is key to linking rural production sectors to national and cross border markets and exports and improving access to economic activity. In order for rural producers to

participate effectively in competitive markets, value adding activities must be encouraged and supported.

- **Support for efforts to promote sustainable resource management**, including land, water and biodiversity is critical as a mechanism that safeguards rural communities. There is therefore a need to
  - promote policies and **land administration** systems that facilitate access to land by communities and provision of support to marginalized groups particularly women
  - ensure that **traditional leaders as custodian of land play a role in land and agrarian reform and implementation of the rural development agenda** at all levels.