

Statement by South Africa at the CSD 17 – IPM

Theme: Drought

Introduction

Madam Chair, the South African delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made by Sudan on behalf of the G77 and China and Senegal on behalf of the African Group.

Globally, drought is posing an increasing threat with severe and adverse implications for sustainable development, especially in developing countries, leading to food shortages, food insecurity owing to a drop in agricultural production, water scarcity and loss of human, animal and plant life. Drought is also a potential source of social and political conflicts emanating from the allocation and utilisation of scarce resources especially water.

Challenges

Madam Chair, the huge dependence of Africa on agriculture renders the continent particularly vulnerable to the impacts of drought. Most of Sub-Saharan Africa faces recurring drought that reduce the stability of already vulnerable and fragile ecosystems which in turn affect human development. Most countries in this region have low resistance to high climatic variability with limited capacity and resources to deal with drought. Of concern is the fact that current climate change scenarios predict that most dry regions of the world will become even drier which signals a risk of drought persistence in many arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, with greater and sustained impacts. Climate change is thus likely to exacerbate the frequency and occurrence of drought, with even greater and sustained negative impacts.

Policy Options

Madam Chair, South Africa holds the view that country specific and regional drought management strategies which make the most of scarce resources should be developed and supported by strong institutional mechanisms and adequate financing. We propose

decisive action in the broad areas of technology, finance, research, capacity development, governance, regional and global cooperation.

- The international community and key global players should support the acquisition, adoption of, access to and implementation of appropriate technologies, scientific research, education, data collections, monitoring and capacity building in developing countries.
- Efforts are needed to step up support towards drought monitoring systems, early warning capacities and risk management strategies in affected developing countries and regions, particularly in Africa such as the Global Climate Change Observation System (GCOS). In addition, support is needed for the establishment of monitoring centres such as Regional, Remote Sensing Units (RRSU). At the forefront should be initiatives to adapt to climate change, manage the associated risks as well as the impacts of extreme weather events, sea level rises and climate variability.
- Access to appropriate technologies should also be supported by development partners providing new, additional and adequate financial resources, technical as well as human capacities to enable the implementation of programmes and projects on drought risk management. Rain water harvesting, drip irrigation, water mix (i.e. use of water mix desalination and effluent material), veld fire management are but some of the strategies and technologies that need to be employed.
- Priority should further be given to investment in research and development particularly in disaster scenario planning and forecasting, innovative, sustainable agricultural technologies and infrastructure, including the transfer of such technologies to developing countries.
- Concerted effort should be directed at improving field training and technical capacity building to affected communities to deal with impacts of drought, desertification and climate change and to be able to grow climate-resilient crops to maintain soil productivity and increase food production in drought-affected drylands.

- South Africa emphasises the promotion of the participation of local communities, indigenous people and their knowledge as well as other civil society groups in decision making through 'learning by doing' approaches given the fact that developing countries have an overriding priority to address poverty and basic human needs through economic and social development.
- Regional to global co-operation is critical to measures aimed at addressing drought and needs to be enhanced through improved South-South and North-South sustainable development co-operation with co-benefits that are directed at combating drought.

Conclusion

Chairperson, drought is indeed a serious impediment towards the attainment of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger. It can set back all the efforts exerted towards the attainment of internationally agreed development goals inclusive of the MDGs and JPoI targets. Sustainable development goals and targets will therefore not be achieved without addressing challenges associated with drought.

I thank you, Madam Chair!