

**Commission on Sustainable Development
18th Session**

High Level Segment

**“Obstacles and constraints to implementation of Agenda
pertaining to themes of the current cycle”;**

12th May 2010

**Statement by Mr. John Gormley, TD,
Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government,
Ireland**

Thank you Mr Chairman. I want to associate myself at the outset with the statement made by Commissioner Potocnik on behalf of the European Union.

We are going through a remarkable and transformational phase in human history. The problems of population growth, depletion of natural resources and still rising poverty levels in many parts of the world serve to underline the sheer scale of the challenge that still confronts us. Finding viable, workable solutions to address the vast problems facing humanity must be our priority.

While the global economic crisis has no precedent for many of us, it, nevertheless, offers an unprecedented opportunity to chart a new course to a more sustainable future.

Mr. Chairman, we know one thing for sure - a return to a business as usual approach is not an option. Instead, we need to devise a coherent set of tools and strategies that will put us on the road not just to economic recovery, but to a more sustainable future. In this context, I very much welcome and support the focus on developing the green economy. A greener approach based on smart technologies, with a focus on innovation and joined up thinking has to be the way forward, as we face a future of ever depleting natural resources.

A 'cradle to grave' approach based on efficient, sustainable use of natural resources, finding efficient ways of reducing and eliminating toxic processes through all stages of production, and efficient management and recovery of resources at end of life, must be embraced with renewed vigour and priority. This is the opportunity to at long last decouple economic growth from

resource and energy use. We know that there are limits to growth and we certainly know there are limits to unsustainable growth.

Ireland is fully committed to the development of the green economy and we have developed an integrated policy approach in this area. We believe that this approach, supported by a focus on research and development, will play a key role in our efforts to reposition our economy on a low carbon trajectory. I would echo the sentiments in the Secretary General's report on the vital role that a 'green new deal' can play in achieving tangible progress in advancing the sustainable development agenda. This will have a positive effect in reducing negative environmental impacts and in providing real hope for vulnerable communities.

Waste management offers many of these benefits if operated on an environmentally sound basis, but we have heard here what happens in the absence of effective controls. A more resource efficient approach to dealing with waste will create jobs, drive innovation, and reduce pollution and threats to human health.

Given the major challenge we face on climate change, it is crucial that we reduce the carbon intensity of our economies. The

transition to more efficient transport systems is one area with considerable potential for progress and the Irish Government has recognised this, and the links to spatial planning and energy efficiency, in our sustainable transport vision for 2020.

We have a shared global responsibility in identifying and pursuing the opportunities that can arise from considering this thematic cluster of CSD as an interlinked unit. All too often, economic priorities have taken precedence over environmental considerations. We must move away from seeing these as competing issues, and concentrate on the benefits that each must bring to our future sustainable development.

A striking feature of the regional discussions was the emphasis placed, particularly by African countries, on food security. Sustainable development is central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the fight against poverty and hunger. Despite budgetary constraints, Ireland has committed to spending 20% of all Overseas Development Aid on reducing hunger by 2012 and is firmly on track to achieve this target. We look forward to a successful conclusion to the High Level Event on the MDGs in September.

Mr. Chairman

This has been a valuable review and we have heard many interesting contributions which will feed into the policy formulation for CSD 19. Achieving CSD objectives continues to pose a huge challenge and will require collaboration from actors across a range of sectors. Ireland looks forward to actively participating in this process.

Thank you