



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Sixteenth Session, New York, 05 – 16 May 2008

Statement by
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on behalf of the European Union
New York, 14 May 2008

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellences, Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a privilege and honour for me and for Slovenia, as EU Presidency, to address the CSD 16 high level segment on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

CSD 16 comes at a moment when the whole world is facing major challenges for sustainable development. Increasing food and energy prices put additional burdens on economies, in particular in developing countries. In this context, African countries demand special attention and actions.

The EU is committed to actions for achieving the MDGs and the JPOI, both internally and at international level.

Mr. Chairman,

Agriculture is by nature a multifunctional activity. It plays a key role in terms of food and raw materials production and provides a livelihood to millions of people. In the EU's rural development policy preserving the landscape and keeping remote areas inhabited are equally important objectives. It is important that throughout the lifecycle of agricultural and food production social, economic, cultural and environmental aspects are taken into account, including the use of sustainable agricultural standards and technologies. Preservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources are also crucial.

The EU is the largest importer of agricultural products from developing countries and supports policies that enable them to benefit from better access to markets. There remain gaps as regards the knowledge-base, sustainable technologies and export capacities in developing countries. Aid for Trade, sharing of best practices and training could help in that respect. Creating an enabling environment for attracting foreign investments and addressing corporate social and environmental responsibility and accountability would also help.

The EU aims to adapt to agricultural production capacities to market demand and to set high environmental standards. Through long term reforms we have largely decoupled income support from production and there

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

has been a significant shift of direct payments to rural development, one of the key elements for an integrated approach to sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

We are all aware that degradation of land and soil is affecting the livelihoods of millions of people. Preservation of natural resources, sustainable land use and soil protection are great challenges. Our knowledge of climate change, desertification and droughts needs to be strengthened and the role of specialized institutions needs to be enhanced. In this context, the ten year strategy of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification provides a framework for implementation.

Africa has enormous agricultural and development potential. Key issues are access to land, enforceable land rights and transparent land policy. Enhancing the competitiveness of African agriculture and food production should therefore be part of the national, regional and global development efforts. In that regard, the vital role of women must be fully recognised. Africa is a strategic partner for the EU. The new Africa-EU Joint Strategy is the political framework for future cooperation. Moreover, EU Aid for Trade will reach 2 billion euros per year from 2010 on.

The EU is deeply committed to the review of the CSD 13 water and sanitation decisions. Despite some progress there is still a need for additional efforts especially in the field of sanitation. Existing monitoring and follow up processes should be strengthened, bearing in mind the next CSD review of these decisions in 2012. Integrating climate change adaptation in policies and in IWRM plans is crucial. These plans are now widely supported; efforts must concentrate on their implementation.

Food insecurity is of serious concern. The background of the present global crisis is manifold. Unfortunately there are too many countries where hunger and malnutrition prevail. In a number of countries this crisis is exacerbated by poor government policies. In those countries governments fail to uphold the principle of good governance and fail to ensure to their citizens international human rights, including the right to adequate food.

We fully recognise, Mr. Chairman, your own personal contribution to this CSD meeting. But we regret policies implemented in recent years by the Government of Zimbabwe, which have had disastrous impacts on sustainable development. Millions are now relying on food aid and there is a constant flow of refugees crossing the borders into surrounding countries. We strongly hope that in the near future Zimbabwe will be a country in which good governance, including respect for human rights, and therefore greater food security are effectively guaranteed.

Cross cutting issues and interlinkages are an essential feature of CSD work and of an integrated approach to sustainable development.

There is a need to address health, social issues, peace and security, the implications of natural disasters, migration, sustainable consumption and production, gender equality and education in an integrated manner. Here too, the role of national stakeholders, international institutions and major groups is indispensable. The EU supports the establishment and strengthening of regional structures to promote sustainable development.

Climate change is closely interlinked with the themes of this CSD cycle as regards both mitigation and adaptation. Climate change impacts are undermining efforts towards sustainable development. This is true in particular in Africa and SIDS. At this session we have witnessed an unfortunate overlap in the programming of the SIDS Day. The EU is of the view that a similar situation can and should be avoided in future years.

This CSD is also a unique opportunity to contribute to other important processes, including the Secretary General's food crisis initiative which we welcome.

The Commission on Sustainable Development plays a unique role within the UN system. Nevertheless, it should be further improved so that it continues to deliver ambitious results towards poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development.

Thank you.