



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

New York, 15 May 2008

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE: Interactive discussion with Major groups

Event scheduled for <b>Thursday, 15 May 2008</b> Conference room 6 Time: <u>11:30 till 13:00</u> . Meeting will last <b>90 minutes</b> BLOCK: Minister intervenes in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> BLOCK
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The session will encompass three “blocks” of time, each comprised of three Major group presentations of five minutes each followed by approximately ten minutes of interactive discussions.

1<sup>st</sup> BLOCK: Women, Indigenous, Youth;

2<sup>nd</sup> BLOCK: NGOs, Local Authorities, Workers and Trade Unions;

3<sup>rd</sup> BLOCK: Business & Industry, Scientific & Technological Community, Farmers.

**1<sup>st</sup> question: (no. 7 on the DESA list): How can the capacity of smallholders to become full participants in modern production system be improved?**

**2<sup>nd</sup> question: (no. 8 on the DESA list): What incentives could be given to small-scale farmers to enhance their transition to more sustainable practice**

Mr. Chair, distinguished representatives of the Major Groups

We are all aware of a role of family farms in rural development where women play a key role. They possess a traditional knowledge, based on own experiences, they live close to nature and use great diversity of genetic resources. They also produce many special local products and family-scaled farming play a key role for the sustainable development of rural territories.

Participation in modern production systems requires that small holders organisational and managerial capacity and technical expertise are strengthened. This would require structural reforms particularly when niche markets – such as organic - are targeted. Proper incentives matching needs-assessment will be in this respect crucial.

Small scale farmers are especially vulnerable to climate change. In order to strengthen their adaptability, sustainable water use, adaptation strategies and protection of agro-diversity could play key roles. The participation of small farmers in direct production-consumption chain and in the markets is of crucial importance for local supply.

In order to develop their agriculture production into a sustainable way, it is necessary to improve the capacity of marketing their products (ie : invest in storage facilities), their ability to process their production locally and to reach the international sanitary and phytosanitary standards in order to provide food of quality to the urban population and so decrease the dependency to imported products.

Sustainable Agricultural practices in urban areas are also crucial and proper policies shall be integrated in urban planning,

Indigenous peoples and Local communities play an important role in preservation of traditional cultural values and local knowledge. Therefore it is important to improve the capacity of small farmers as well as for setting the most effective rural development policies. To support small-holders in developing countries in their transition to sustainable practices it is crucial to improve their access to information and sustainable technologies as well as secure their land-tenure rights. Education lies in the center of integrated and participatory approach. It is equally important to invest in labour opportunities for youth as this could avoid further moving from rural to urban areas.

It is crucial to raise the awareness of all involved stakeholders. The “power to the people” concept is being applied through the penetration of ICT (information Communication Technologies) and will be applied through the new paradigm of renewables - based, distributed and decentralised energy production, where natural resources and rural areas are gaining un-preceded advantages.

Ladies and Gentlemen. Are we able to identify the similar decentralised logic in agriculture and in sustainable development? This would consequently mean that governmental policies, including incentives, shall to a substantial degree match well elaborated community needs assessment and thus become much more tailor-made to the needs of the local communities. Policies shall be implemented along with the setting up of the robust and measurable sustainability criteria for the production!

Mr/Madam . Chair

In his opening speech the Secretary General underlined the need to adjust agricultural systems to the realities of the climate change. This will call for integration of all related policies.

Public participation to policy-making to combat desertification and drought is still inadequate. Increased participation of all stakeholders will allow coping more effectively with critical and specific local problems, such as preservation of the common natural resources.

The interlinkages coupled with the partnership with the mayor groups will be in a centre of gravity of such integration process, which shall, besides positioning agriculture in the core of the resilience to climate change, equally serve to most vulnerable regions, particularly in Africa, to achieve regional food sovereignty, wherever possible, and improve implementation of the Millennium development goals.

Thank you very much for your attention!