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Statement by
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on behalf of the European Union
New York, 16 May 2008

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the outset, let me thank you, Mr Chairman, and your Vice-Chairs, for guiding us through this year's CSD session. Our gratitude also goes to the Secretariat and all those behind the scenes, including ENB report writers. Interpreters deserve special thanks for helping us understand each other.

I have the honour today to speak 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, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

Mr. Chairman,

The CSD has once more proved that it is a unique forum in the UN system, addressing sustainable development issues in an integrated manner, their interlinkages and cross-cutting issues. Government representatives, international institutions, public and private stakeholders and major groups came together and discussed obstacles, constraints and best practices in relation to agriculture, rural development, drought and desertification, land and Africa.

The successful review of CSD 13 water and sanitation decisions has demonstrated the strong added value of this Commission and its relevance as regards the need to monitor progress. We look forward to further follow-up. We will support the translation of main findings into policy decisions at CSD 17. This will be an intermediate step on the way to the 2012 review and meeting the MDGs by 2015.

We heard clear messages concerning in particular the seriousness of the current food crisis. Immediate action is required. Therefore, the EU welcomes the global food crisis task force established by the Secretary-General and we look forward to the high-level conference on food security and climate change impacts on agriculture, in Rome in early June. At the same time, the EU fully supports the Secretary-General's emphasis on the need for long-term policy responses.

Climate change impacts are undermining the efforts of all countries, especially in Africa and SIDS, as regards sustainable development in all its aspects. Therefore, the EU strongly supports policies on adaptation to climate change, including measures to combat desertification and improve water management.

Concerning SIDS, the EU welcomes the decision confirming that each review session of the CSD will devote a day exclusively to review of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

Mr Chairman,

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

Our challenge is to expedite implementation through concrete measures both by the UN and its Member States, while fully recognizing national and regional experiences and differences. We have to ensure coherence between policy and review sessions.

Let me end by repeating our thanks to all those who contributed to the positive and stimulating atmosphere over the past two weeks. We do hope that this constructive spirit will continue during the intersessional period into next year.