



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

INTERLINKAGES AND CROSSCUTTING ISSUES

Statement by
Mr. Marko HREN
Slovenian EU Presidency

on behalf of the European Union
New York, 9 May 2008

Madam Chair,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Distinguished delegates!

It is an honour for Slovenia as the EU Presidency to present this intervention 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, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.*

The CSD 16/17 offers an excellent opportunity to highlight the interlinkages of the different themes. Agriculture, rural development, land, desertification and drought are not only highly interrelated as themes but they also have strong links with cross-cutting issues identified at CSD11. In addition, they are all very relevant for Africa. An integrated approach is crucial when elaborating promotion of sustainable development in the world. Improving the knowledge base involved in all this is needed in order to strive after sustainable development objectives, both to eradicate poverty and to improve the environment globally, particularly in Africa. To foster this integrated approach, the EU proposes to focus on three priorities:

1. The interlinkages between agriculture, land management, and the natural resource base, with a focus on water, climate change, forests and biodiversity.
2. The cross-cutting goal of changing unsustainable consumption patterns¹, with a focus on food consumption and on the Marrakech process.
3. The promotion of policy coherence, stakeholder engagement, ownership and participation to national SD strategies, including in research policies and all stages of education.

1. Water, climate change and biodiversity as interlinkages between CSD16/17 themes

° **Biodiversity and forests provides benefits, assets and values for present and future generations also through ecosystem services which are vital for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Ecosystem services represent an essential set of priorities for achieving quality of life.** They include providing vital services such as food, fuel, fibre and medicine; supporting services such as maintenance of soil fertility and cycling of nutrients; ensuring regulation services such as climate balancing, water purification, watershed protection and finally cultural services such as cultural landscapes and recreation facilities. The EU underlines the importance of these services and supports the development of mechanisms which contribute to their provision.

° **Traditional knowledge has an important contribution to make as regards the protection of the natural resource base in all countries. The EU endeavours to reintegrate this knowledge, where appropriate, into the land and agricultural planning processes.** Indigenous and local communities,

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

¹ The priorities of these speaking points do not focus on production patterns because supply aspects and production patterns related to the cluster are already widely addressed in the other speaking points, while demand aspects and consumption patterns have only briefly been mentioned in these other speaking points.

as traditional knowledge holders, have therefore a vital role here and their rights need to be protected from all kinds of pressures. In this sense we wish to highlight the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a milestone and an important political commitment. Conservation areas can both sustain traditional livelihood of local communities and foster natural resources management. They can thereby generate sustainable community-based-tourism, which can contribute to local welfare, limit urban migration pressures and safeguard traditional culture. The ecological footprint of such traditional tourism activities is smaller than those of the tourism industry, which tends to be concentrated in biodiversity hotspots with the highest variety of species. (cf: §30 to 36 in the SG Report on Africa).

° **Strong interlinkages between agriculture, land-management, the central role of water to sustaining life and human development, and the natural resource base have not always been taken into account properly.** This has resulted in degradation of the resource base and loss of biodiversity, thus impacting the quality of ecosystem services. Global warming might additionally affect local and regional biodiversity to a dramatic extent and might increase the frequency of extreme events such as floods and droughts. We need to improve the overall understanding of these interlinkages as well as the global social and economic emergency (and cost of inaction) concerning these issues. Greater cooperation and coordination at the national level in these areas will contribute to facilitating sustainable development policies and alleviating possible existing pressures among these areas.

° **To tackle these opportunities (ecosystem services and traditional knowledge) and challenges (understanding the importance of interlinkages between water, climate change, forests and agriculture and land management), the EU actively supports global initiatives and agreements that are pursuing the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. These involve the integrated water resources management as well as the promotion of a large number of policy instruments, including:**

- The Convention on Biological Diversity and its decisions in this respect;
- International Treaty on Plant and Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
- International efforts on avoiding deforestation, the sustainable management of forests, and combating trade in illegally harvested timber;
- Protection of the marine environment and efforts to identify a network of protected marine areas by 2012.
- The Convention to combat desertification
- The Convention of Wetlands of international importance
- The Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and National Heritage
- The newly established International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management

2. Changing unsustainable food consumption patterns and Marrakech process.

- **The EU is fully aware that world agriculture is called upon to play a variety of roles in which the trade-offs are considerable and often difficult. The greatest challenge in relation to food is the trade-off between providing sufficient ecosystem services and food security for the global population, including for the needs of hundreds of millions of people who lack the money to buy what they need or the resources to produce it themselves, on one hand, while responding to the demand of billions of consumers with changing patterns of consumption on the other hand.** (cf: §14, 22&55; SG Report on Agriculture).
- The trend of increasing use of agricultural land for energy production may bring major benefits to the world's rural areas, but at the same time contribute to increasing food prices. Hence, this development should be based on sustainable use of natural resources taking into account the life cycle approach and food security.
- A further challenge is the use of nutrient fertilizers and pesticides, which need to be used in a sustainable manner in order to avoid damaging the health of people and the resource bases, especially drinking and fishing waters.
- **In many parts of the world food consumption patterns and diets are changing with rising incomes, and are characterized by declining share of staples, such as cereals** (by far the world most important source of food), roots and tubers, **and the increasing share of meat and dairy product** (also using cereals as inputs to livestock production). (cf: §14 in the SG Report on Agriculture). This evolution increases the stress on natural resources as growing consumption appears to outstrip the environmental improvements achieved by means of environmental technologies. Responsible marketing, information tools such as eco-labelling, and education to promote healthy lifestyles and ecologically sustainable food production can assist in changing such unsustainable consumption and production patterns.
- **The old divide between countries suffering from diseases resulting from**

undernourishment and countries suffering from diseases resulting from overweight is changing. According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment many countries now face the double burden of diet related disease: the simultaneous challenges of significant incidence of acute, communicable disease in undernourished populations and increasing incidence of chronic diseases associated with the overweight and obese.²

- **To counteract unsustainable production and consumption patterns, the EU shares the view that the Marrakech Process provides a useful forum for international cooperation and can hold benefits with high potential for countries in very different situations**³. **This process promotes an integrated approach addressing both consumption and production sides, including the role of informed consumers in driving change towards more sustainable consumption patterns, products and production systems**, especially through the contributions of its voluntary Task Forces. The EU actively contributes to the development of a 10-year framework of programs on SCP, taking the commitment of article 15 of the JPoI forward. In this context, education for sustainable development has a valuable role and should be further developed as a prospective tool in seeking to balance human and economic welfare with cultural traditions and respect for the earth's resources and the environment.
- In order to strengthen EU policies on SCP and contribute to policy coherence, the European Commission is developing an EU SCP Action Plan based on the renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy.

3. Policy coherence and stakeholder participation and ownership

- **To achieve progress in all of these interrelated areas, the EU supports the full implementation of national sustainable development planning processes and targeted strategies that combine social, economic and environmental considerations.** These considerations include the greening of all policies, and decoupling economic growth and environmental degradation, as well as equity in income distribution and human resource development. Transition to a low carbon economy and mainstreaming gender equality in all policies can serve as examples of such policies. Such transitions require closer cooperation along the whole life cycle and genuine consideration of all gender aspects.
- **Engagement with, and inclusion of, a broad range of stakeholders in early stage of policy making in all areas is decisive for overall policy coherence and broad ownership of strategies.** Education lies in the centre of such an approach and EU calls for more synergies to be assured between the CSD process and the other regional initiatives and programs on education for sustainable development, such as the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development. Education on SCP is a powerful tool for raising public awareness and changing the values and visions of societies. The construction of new societal visions needs public participation and should not only be government-driven.
- **Coordinated management of mitigation and adaptation to still largely unpredictable changing climatic conditions remains a particular challenge. As major groups underline: a fundamental shift in agricultural research and development will be key to explore appropriate responses.** Global and regional financial institutions, together with the private sector should be encouraged to cooperate and develop innovative and coherent financial instruments to fund resilience to climate change. The insertion of the climate variable into multiple policy areas, the assessment of its potential impacts in particular with regard to food security and sustainable livelihoods, and policy coordination require new and innovative policy-thinking and approaches at the national level. Integrated management of multiple policy areas is needed in both rural and urban areas.
- To reduce the implementation deficit of the JPoI, and to keep isolated sector-specific commitments from undermining the achievement of other policies, policy coherence must involve all policy sectors. This still remain a considerable challenge, also for the CSD16/17 thematic cluster issues. **The complex issues of sustainable agriculture and land-use are highly interwoven with numerous other policy areas, including the achievement of MDGs, trade, as well as development cooperation related aspects. The EU believes that coherent and consistent policy-making at all levels affecting agriculture and related trade is crucial to foster broad-based sustainable development in both developed and developing countries.**
- **The EU deals with these interrelated challenges, inter alia, through:**

² Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, *Ecosystem and Human Well-Being: Current State and Trends*, 8.4.1.1.5 The "diet transition"

³ Co-chairs Summary of the 3rd International Expert Meeting of the Marrakech Process – 20 July 2007, page 47

1. The renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) adopted in 2006 by the European Council that sets out a single, coherent plan on how the EU will more effectively pursue the overarching objective of sustainable development enshrined in the Treaty. It tackles seven key challenges – including climate change and clean energy. This way we are devising, **with the support all EU NSDSs and of the European Sustainable Development Network, a sustainable development path, which will also address the issues of green public procurement, sustainable industrial policy and sustainable consumption and production (within an integrated action plan) and revised audit system and eco-labelling (within the revised directives).**

2. The new three year cycle of the EU Strategy for Growth and Jobs (known as Lisbon strategy).

3. The integrated Energy and Climate Change Package of policies as well as the new green paper on “Adaptation to Climate Change in Europe - options for EU action”.

Thank you.