

**Statement by  
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**on  
"Agriculture"  
before  
The 16<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Sustainable Development**

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In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Mr. Chairman;

At the outset, I would like to thank the panelists for their excellent presentations and associate myself with the statements made by the distinguished representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of G-77 and China on sustainable development and on the theme "Agriculture". My delegation believes that agriculture plays a significant role in the achievement of the three pillars of sustainable development. In addition, it should be considered in an integrated manner with rural development, land, desertification, drought and water. I take the opportunity and refer to several gaps and constraints in agriculture sector in my country and around the globe:

1. **Agriculture accounts for the use of 70 to 80 per cent of the global water supply.** 30 per cent reduction in precipitation in the last winter in my country has intensified the water scarcity situations particularly in dry and semi-dry lands. Changing in the patterns of precipitation coupled with unprecedented cold weather contributed to the exacerbation of drought as well as the water-stressed conditions and will lead to decrease in the agricultural products in the current year. Irrigation systems require further improvement for sustainable use of water resources. My country has invaluable traditional knowledge and experiences in building underground aqueducts, namely Qanat, for transporting water from remote sources. Likewise, the appropriate technologies such as low-pressure drip irrigation systems have contributed to enhance agricultural productivity. We believe that the policy of "more crop per drop" should be pursued for decreasing the use of fresh water and increasing agricultural products.
2. **Desertification and drought** continue to pose serious threats to agricultural lands. Unsustainable agriculture expands the desert areas. Overgrazing and degradation of the rangelands are exacerbating land degradation and desertification.
3. Special assistance should be extended to **Farmers. Women** are the main producers of the world's staple crops, particularly rice, in rural areas. They are highly engaged in producing 60 to 80 per cent of foodstuffs in developing countries. Such productive

engagements coupled with household related responsibilities have imposed hard living conditions, illiteracy, and poor health on women. These parameters have led to the deprivation of women from many social and economic privileges. Addressing the special needs of women and their empowerment should be in priority in any national plan for human resource development in agricultural sector.

4. **Mismanagement of land use** change and **unsustainable development of urban areas** contain and gradually reduce the areas suitable for agriculture.
5. Appropriate and environmentally-sound production and distribution of seeds are essential for sustainable agriculture. Degradation of indigenous seeds contributes to the loss of biodiversity and dependency of farmers on non-local seeds, particularly those originating from other countries. Genetically modified seeds may cause harm to the environment and human health, if necessary measures are not taken in the context of precautionary approach to the biotechnology products.
6. **Pesticide residues** and the use of **veterinary medicines** contaminate soil and waterways. Further studies and appropriate plans are required for minimization of their impacts on human health and the environment including waterways and fish stocks.
7. Undoubtedly, **fertilizers** contribute to soil fertility. However, the use of less and less organic fertilizers and more and more chemical fertilizers has increased concerns over their adverse impacts on human health and environment.
8. The role of **middlemen** and brokers in escalating the price of agricultural products and lowering down of the farmers' incomes are undeniable. Necessary measures, such as establishment and empowerment of agricultural cooperatives, should be taken to create a direct link between the producers and real consumers of agricultural products.
9. **Livestock sector** is a major user of agricultural lands. Adverse impact of avian flu on livestock is crystal clear. Capture fisheries have reached their maximum production level. Aquaculture is fortunately continue to grow particularly in developing countries and contributes to income generation and food security. However, the unsustainable release of residue of the fish farming into the nature continues to contaminate soil and waterways.
10. **Permanent migration** from villages to major cities in developing countries in search of paid employment affects adversely the agricultural activities.
11. Growing agricultural products at global level have not kept pace with the **increasing demands** of the world population for foodstuffs. Lack of appropriate patterns of consumption, particularly in developed countries, contributes to the enhancement of food crisis. The current food crisis may lead to expansion of poverty and hunger and further social unrest, if appropriate and coherent measures are not taken at national, regional and international levels. It may harm the efforts to halve global hunger and poverty as the first goal of MDGs by 2015.
12. The recent **food crisis** casts doubts on the sustainability of the **biofuel** development projects. The policy of biofuel production requires further studies in order not to threaten food security and protection of natural resources.

*I thank you Mr. Chairman.*