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Intervention by

H.E. Mrs. Gerda Verburg,

Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

of

the Kingdom of the Netherlands

**on the occasion of the Round Table Ministerial Discussion
regarding**

**“Interlinkages among the thematic issues, including adaptation to
climate change in the context of sustainable development”**

**High-Level Segment of the 16th session of the Commission on
Sustainable Development**

New York, 14 May 2007

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Mr. Chairperson,

Climate change has confronted us with many challenges. We have to focus on adaptation measures. In particular least developed countries are hit hardest. Look at what happened in Myanmar. Adapting to climate change will influence our lives in general and could make a difference between "life or death".

Anticipating extreme weather and being prepared for disasters can save many lives. Most of our knowledge on adaptation to climate change is relatively young. We therefore need to increase our knowledge base about effective adaptation policies and share experiences with other states. This knowledge should be integrated in development strategies, in particular into policies for sustainable food production. The Netherlands and the UK have recently commissioned a study which will be carried out by the World Bank to fill in important knowledge gaps relating to the costs of adaptation.

For the monitoring of climate change a climate it is necessary to create a climate observation system, spanning the earth, particularly in Africa. The World Meteorological Organisation has made plans to fill in the gaps and coordinate material and financial support to help developing countries set up their own climate observation system. Such monitoring systems will assist all states to develop effective policies in order to adapt to climate change. For example, in relation to national agricultural production.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fourth assessment report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that the hunger crisis in Africa will deepen, following the degradation of farmland, shorter growing seasons and decreasing yields. This will affect food security and increase malnutrition even further.

There are no easy answers. But, first and foremost we have to respond by substantially investing more in sustainable agriculture.

In the last decade we have neglected agriculture in our international policies for sustainable development. In many countries the productivity can and should be considerably improved in a sustainable way. This should be done by sharing knowledge, developing sustainable production chains, supporting local and regional markets, but also in the field of water use and access to sustainable energy resources.

Agricultural land can also contribute to combat climate change by absorbing carbon. Investments in agricultural productivity and sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources need at the same time be combined with a better understanding what the effects will be of adapting to climate change in the long term. The industrialised countries have a special responsibility to provide the main part of the solution. We believe that new and additional funding is needed to support the poorest countries in this effort.

The Netherlands Government is committed to improve sustainable agricultural development in developing countries in order to reduce poverty and hunger. We announced last week that we will invest an additional 50 million Euros for the revitalisation of agriculture, agricultural knowledge and training, local economies and ensuring food security in developing countries. I call upon other donor countries to increase their investments as well.

No conflict exists between development and investments in adaptation. Adaptation is smart development!

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.