

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY CHAIR

Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

This is the CSDs first session under the new Programme of Work adopted by CSD-11 under the able leadership of H.E. Minister Valli Moosa.

This is the CSDs first “non-negotiating” session. We are to act as “watchdogs” of progress in the implementation of the Johannesburg goals and targets.

This is the CSD’s first session not focusing on all issues in an a la carte manner, but on a few selected themes - water, sanitation and human settlements.

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank the government of South Africa for its key role in creating a political momentum for sustainable development. I know that we will do our best to ensure that the Johannesburg Summit becomes the beginning of a process leading to actions and results on the ground.

Let me also recognize my Vice Chairs in the Bureau and the CSD-Secretariat for their dedication and hard work in preparing for this session.

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We are gathered to take a hard honest look at how we are doing. For this we have set aside two whole weeks.

Two weeks of thematic sessions and sessions devoted to overall reviews on sustainable development. We have a fully-booked partnership fair and more than 80 side events to help us conduct our review.

Two weeks culminating in a high level segment with more than 80 ministers representing water, sanitation, human settlements, environment and development.

Two weeks to explore where we have succeeded and where have we failed; to analyze why; to identify best practices, obstacles and constraints; to discuss where and how we must strengthen our efforts.

We have two weeks – let’s make the most of them.

Meeting the targets on water, sanitation and human settlements is a prerequisite for reaching the targets in other crucial areas such as poverty eradication, education, child mortality, health and environmental sustainability. In Africa, women and girls must walk

on average 6 kilometres a day to fetch water – often polluted water – spending hours that could have been better spent on getting an education or on income generation and other tasks.

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It is estimated that only half of the developing countries are on track towards meeting the global target of halving the number of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015. This target translates into providing access to safe water to an additional 1.6 billion people over 15 years.

It is a daunting challenge. But it must be done and it can be done. In South Africa more than 9 million people have been given access to safe drinking water since 1994.

It must be done because water is key to economic growth. There is a clear correlation between water coverage and economic performance.

It must be done because water is key to the environment and ecosystems. Ground water is under pressure. More than 50% of all wetlands have been destroyed.

It must be done because already next year we must demonstrate results on the goal on integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans by 2005.

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The global sanitation target means that 2 billion people will need to gain access to improved sanitation between now and 2015.

It is estimated that only one third of the developing countries are on track towards meeting this target -which is closely linked to the water target.

There can be no clean water without giving adequate attention to sanitation. This was recognised in Johannesburg, where sanitation was for the first time brought to the centre of the poverty eradication commitments.

Total economic benefits of reaching the sanitation target may be of the order of USD 63 billion annually. With a cost of about USD 11 billion, this implies that investments in sanitation yield six-fold benefits. The case for sanitation speaks for itself.

Furthermore, sanitation and hygiene are key to human health. More than half of the hospital beds in the world are occupied by people with water-related diseases. Untreated wastewater is a major cause of disease as well as an environmental concern, with 90% of sewage being discharged untreated.

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The sanitation challenges are greatest in the rapidly growing slum areas, often located on the outskirts of the developing world's cities.

Today the number of slum dwellers amount to 900 million people. This figure is estimated to rise to nearly 2 billion people by 2030 - unless serious measures are taken.

We have a big task ahead of us, which involves substantially improving the situation for at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

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Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

This years' CSD-session will benefit from Regional Implementation Fora - helping to bridge the gap between global words and regional action.

It will benefit from the CSDs unique tradition of integrated approaches to cross-cutting issues and the involvement of major groups in interactive dialogues.

It will benefit from the Secretary-General's substantial reports and from a series of meetings held in preparation for the CSD.

Finally, let me quote the Secretary-General at his "End of Year Press Conference";

-He said: "Let's get our priorities right in 2004".

-He said: "Let's make 2004 the year of kept promises".

I believe this is the platform upon which we must base our work.

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