



Ministry of Agriculture

**Statement by Mr Rolf Eriksson, State
Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture,
Sweden, at the
Ministerial Round Table Discussion
entitled "Investing in Africa to
achieve Millenium Development Goals
and Sustainable Development".
CSD 16 High Level Segment, New York,
14 May 2008**

Mr Chairman, dear Colleagues,

Economic globalisation has brought an unprecedented global rise in incomes, and development in many of the poorest countries, including in Africa, shows signs of moving in the right direction. However, the exclusion from the global economy experienced by many developing countries continues to pose one of the biggest challenges to the goal of achieving equitable and sustainable global development. Meeting that challenge is largely a matter of unleashing the inherent capacity of countries and individuals to pursue economic activities and trade. Reducing economic exclusion among people who live in developing countries calls for transparent and predictable ground rules at global, regional, national and local level.

Being state secretary for agriculture it is naturally important, in my understanding, that the importance and potential of the agricultural

sector is fully acknowledged. In many African countries, agriculture and related industries represent the largest economic sector and a motor for the total economy of the societies. Several African countries are also heavily dependent on their fishing industry, both from a trade perspective and with regard to industrial considerations. No other sector has the scope or potential to lead broad-based growth, which nonetheless requires sustainable productivity increases and investments in combination with better marketing opportunities for agricultural products. Local markets and an appropriate infrastructure must be in place so that poor farmers can find an outlet for their products.

The World Bank World Development Report for 2008 states that development in agriculture is of central importance to poverty reduction and food security, for the first millennium goal. Besides food production, agriculture and forestry also have the potential of producing renewable energy and renewable raw materials, and so help in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The roles of states, civil society and the market must be reviewed. Particular focus should be given to the roles and opportunities for women in agriculture along with related issues such as access to legal systems, ownership, tenancy and users' rights, the opportunity of obtaining loans and credits, and access to market places. Support for rural development can also act as an investment in gender equality.

In the long run, increasing world market prices for agricultural products are leading to better profitability for agricultural production, which can be used for investments that contribute to increased productivity and rural development.

In order to achieve sustainable productivity increases and investments there is a need to improve conditions for saving and investment

among poor women and men. A fundamental requirement is a just, non-discriminatory, transparent legal system, one in which property rights protection occupies a particularly important place. Through development cooperation, we can help support the efforts of developing countries to improve their investment climate and macroeconomic stability.

More trade is needed, not less. Increased trade and foreign investment of the kind that creates jobs with decent terms and conditions and contributes to knowledge transfer and socially and environmentally sustainable development are also essential. As part of its enterprise and development policies, the Swedish Government intends to emphasise the vital role of private enterprise as a driver of growth and development, without however departing from the Swedish principle of non-tied aid.

The Swedish Government supports the development of financial markets that are of use to and benefit poor people. The Government also supports programmes and initiatives – through Sweden's involvement in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank – aimed at promoting a generally stable economic climate, effective national regulations and monitoring of the international financial system. Action focused more specifically on promoting the development of financial services markets are also of vital importance.

Thank you!