

UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting, New York, 23 – 27 February 2009

Highlights of Side Events

24 February 2009

Network of Women Agricultural Ministers and Leaders

The CSD-17 Chairperson Ms. Gerda Verburg delivered opening remarks. “CSD has to deliver a way forward, and we must recognize that women play a key role in sustainable development, especially in agriculture. However, they are too often neglected in the policy-making process.”. A clear message was sent regarding the need to find the way to synergize the energy from various sources to realize women potential.

The Network of Women Agriculture Ministers and Leaders is a “sister network”, launched last year in Nairobi. The objective of this Network is to establish a mechanism for women leaders participating in policy- making process, and providing concrete policy recommendations to the CSD and beyond, on global issues such as food security and climate change. The Event was organized as a brainstorming session, aiming at stimulating discussion and collecting ideas on how the Network should be organized in the future in order to achieve its objective.

During the discussion, participants contributed numerous suggestions and recommendations. Women local authority was recognized as a key force to deliver changes at community level. International policy processes such as CSD were considered extremely important forums for women to make contributions on policy recommendations, and to demonstrate their leadership. Provision of guidance to policy-makers with the aim to make them more gender sensitive was also recommended.

Within the context of CSD-17 themes, an angle identified for uplifting women’s role in food security issue was through, in addition to production, access to food and market, as those areas could be expected to provide opportunities for women to both decent employment and further involvement in decision- making. Data and scientific research on sustainable agriculture and land-use are identified important factors for supporting women landowners in their agriculture and land-use practices, and in achieving the goal of sustainable use and management of resources.

It was recommended that a regular Event should be organized to support the working process of the Network. It was also recognized that an organization’s Charter or Plan of Action should be developed. The importance of institutional development was highlighted, as many spelled the concern that without continuous institutional efforts to administer follow- up actions to the previous decisions, it would be hard to make such network and its contribution in policy-making effective.

More women leaders from farmer organizations, rural communities and agricultural industries are encouraged to participate in the Network. A Women Leadership Training for farmers and rural population is to be organized to support them. In order to move forward, more work will be needed for applying overarching gender principle.

25 February

Water as a Cross-Cutting Issue for CSD-17

The side event presented some initial findings from a broad consultation with global stakeholders on water as a cross-cutting issue for CSD-17. The focus was on water in relation to rural development, land, drought, desertification and agriculture.

Comprehensive recommendations on addressing the linkages between water issue and other highly water- dependent issues were made in the recent GPPN report. It was highlighted in the presentation that national policy and utilization schemes should take into account the true value of water, with emphasis on demand management through pro-poor rational pricing mechanisms. Sustainable water resource management is critical for agriculture. A concept of “water market” has been raised, reflecting the increasing pressure from water scarcity and the importance of water security. Development of integrated land and water management could and should be achieved through decentralized land management approach. The use of water footprint analysis in dry-land areas was recommended to identify the problems and solutions for combating drought. Governments should make concrete commitments to increase funding of the UNCCD, the most under-funded of Rio Convention.

Related policy targets have been set for 2009- 2013. The key question was how to increase the effectiveness of policy implementation through targeted and timely actions. The UN was also expected to translate the latest scientific inputs properly for policy makers across the world. Economically attractive and innovative solutions are expected to be tabled for inspiring and helping local communities. In particular, CSD session should also consider how to achieve effective coordination between issues as air, water biodiversity and climate change.

The speaker from UNSGAB briefed on the HASHIMOTO Action Plan and its achievements so far. “Access to Safe Water” is making progress in Africa. The UNSGAB informed that prioritization of water and sanitation in national policies would be one key issue in the CSD 17. The UNSGAB also supported the idea that water issue needs to be treated as cross- cutting issue in the session, and underscored the key focus on MDG targets on water and sanitation, and keeping IWRM approach alive.

Recommendations on addressing the linkages between water and migration, water and education were also raised during the discussion.

Enabling Policies for Development and Sustainability: Reports by IAASTD

Different reports were presented during the side-event session on Enabling Policies for Development and Sustainability. The Moderator gave a brief on the importance of the research works carried out by the panellists and their groups identifying them as pivotal to the next phase of agricultural development and socio-economical stability not only on a national, regional scale but having a global impact as well.

International Assessment of Agricultural knowledge, Science and Technological Development (IAASTD) during this session presented 4 reports covering issues of Human’s Right to food; the feminisation of the agriculture (and the inequalities associated with the gender in the sector); the risks and uncertainties of agricultural operations in sub Saharan Africa due to high level illiteracy, poor funding and lack of political will; and finally from the ESAP the use of the Agriculture Knowledge Science and Technology systems to involve the different stakeholders in the development and implementation of agricultural policies not only from a regional perspective but also globally.

The interrelatedness of lack of enabling agriculture policies with other ailments in the global society was coherently presented by the panellists. The poor agricultural infrastructure in most areas dealt with by the report showed that there was an outward migration of male labour force from the rural areas, the agricultural practices was not consistent with water management practices resulting to low agricultural productivity, incorrect chemical use was a health hazard to the farmers mostly females.

There was a consensus that there is need to articulate policies that promote and drive agriculture, socioeconomic and environmental goals within the purview of issues of food security, climate change mitigation and adaptation, gender equality, the safety and human dignity. It was agreed by all participants that there is a need for political will, use of proven agro-ecological measures, technologies and capacity building to achieve the goals articulated by IAASTD. The session called on the different stakeholders (Government, Private sector and the Civil Society) to take the initiative to ensure that agriculture (and its constituents) is not neglected.

In conclusion, it was clear to all participants that the problems are known and ways how to solve them are well documented. However it is important that needed financial and political will is put in place in order to bring about the necessary change in the present unsustainable direction.

26 February

Urban- Rural Linkages for Food Security and Vibrant Markets

This side event provided an overview of important ways local authorities, in partnership with other Major Groups, reduce poverty and hunger through urban rural linkages in both developing and developed countries. The focus was rediscovering and revitalizing the role and potential of markets in reconnecting agriculture and consumers in different regions. Key policy options for national and international support of urban rural partnerships were also presented, including support to direct linking rural and urban sectors elsewhere; support to increased role of local authorities and prioritizing local procurement to support development of markets at all levels. Urban-rural linkage was broadly explored in economic social and environmental dimensions and beyond food security.

Strengthening local partnerships for food security and vibrant markets can take many forms. The diversity of such partnerships, reflecting diverse cultural and agro-ecological systems, can be “essential food security safety nets”. Rediscovery of locally-grown food market has been identified as key dynamic factor to re-engage farmers and urban consumers in a new architecture comprising multi dimensions of sustainable agriculture, improved urban-rural livelihood, food security, production and consumption of nutritious, high quality food, improved ecosystem services and social inclusion in the local context. Food, ecology, local benefits could converge into an effective and healthy market-supported system.

Participants were invited to provide comments and thoughts on how to uplift such local- level market approach to international dimension. Given the challenge of insufficient available funding, suggestions were raised around linking such approach to carbon finance in developed countries, to enable financing between North and South for fostering the growth. Thoughts on scaling up local food products market were also inspired by the “direct sale” or “direct marketing” happening in the processing industry. Revitalized local food markets through direct sales are bringing tremendous economic benefits to the local farmers. Sufficient infrastructure, including transportation, distribution and information system, would be necessary to allow building effective and homogeneous urban-rural linkages. Recognition of this issue in national policies would be the key to bringing it from local to national level.

The management of local food-shed as an element in the local land use practices was brought forward as a responsibility for local authorities. Many innovative approaches on linking rural to urban were introduced, such as combining municipal waste management and disposal with local agricultural activities at grass-root level in New York.

It was suggested that CSD should consider identifying gaps in addressing this issue at various levels, in particular, the gaps in the arrangements of UN agencies.

27 February

Breaking In and Moving Up - New Industrial Challenges for the Bottom Billion and the Middle Income Countries

In her opening remarks, the Chairperson of CSD-17 reminded that the important linkage between industrial and agricultural sectors should not be forgotten. In many countries, the key to expanding their exportation is through investments in their agro-industries. UNIDO's 2009 Industrial Development Report, launched at this critical time when the world is confronting multi-fold crisis, provides insights on challenges and opportunities to countries on various industrial growth patterns, with a special focus on the bottom- billion and the middle- income countries.

The lead author of the Report outlined the main findings. One of the findings is "what you make matters". Only the right sort of industrial development will stimulate the right sort of economic growth. As the Report shows, differences in levels of total factor productivity are co-related with differences in the levels of development. Therefore, the conclusion is countries in the process of industrialization must develop appropriate strategies fitting their structural characteristics. In particular, "right approach" of industrial development to help the bottom billion needs to be considered. Given the fact that countries with bottom billion are mostly of small economic size, a viable strategy for them is to well integrate into global economy. Large amount of industrial components and services are outsourced through globalization, to developing countries which enjoy competitive advantages. The phenomenal "trade in task" has contributed dramatically to the economic growth and poverty reduction in China. Looking into specific sectors, a trend shows that, in the past decades, there has been a growing "vertical disintegration" in manufacturing industries. This implies that more specialized-skill training is required for the bottom billion in order to benefit from such industrial growth.

During the panel discussion, discussants provided insightful and stimulating comments on the Report, including relations between industrial development and natural resource consumption, market competitiveness of industries in developing countries, role of governments and private sectors, bottlenecks of infrastructure and human capitals, coherence of policy and strategy, regional economic integration. It was emphasized that low wage and low- value- added based economic growth has a ceiling, and sophistication of products matters. This message is particularly important for the bottom billion. Education was emphasized in its façade as "economic issue", as investment in human capital is indispensable to the industrialization of poor countries, and enables them to further move beyond low paid and low value-added industries. It was noted that training and education on problem-solving skills needs to be strengthened particularly in Africa.