

Capacity Development Workshop on Improving Agricultural Productivity,
Water Use Efficiency and Rural Livelihoods”, Bangkok, Thailand, 28-30
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*Closing Statement by
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H.E. Ms. Gerda Verburg, Chairperson of CSD-17
Bureau Members, Distinguished participants
Ladies and Gentlemen

The Capacity Development Workshop on Improving Agricultural Productivity, Water Use Efficiency and Rural Livelihoods” is now coming to a close. The discussions during this meeting had been very rich and forward looking.

Various presentations made here in this meeting eloquently exhibited the current status in achieving the goals and targets agreed under the agricultural and rural development agenda, as well about the effectiveness of land and water management policies in achieving sustainable development and reducing rural poverty.

These presentations not only highlighted the challenges we are facing in achieving the sustainable agricultural and rural development, but demonstrated that these obstacles could be overcome.

I would like to thank all the participants for their inputs, and especially the speakers for their thematic and country presentations. We all can take away something positive from this meeting. The country representatives have perhaps gained better understanding of policy reforms needed to advance the implementation of agriculture and rural development agenda, and the urgency to implement these reforms. The CSD Bureau is in a better position to align the global policy discussions in the forthcoming CSD session with realities on the ground. Major groups can think of better ways to contribute in bridging the gaps between global policy formulation and local level implementation.

This Workshop has covered a wide-range of issues and I would like to briefly touch upon four issues.

First, we noted that for achieving rural development and food security, it is necessary to use a comprehensive framework encompassing sustainable agriculture development and improving the management of land and water resources. In the absence of such a framework, it will be difficult to reverse the

trends with regard to rural poverty and undernourishment. Further institutional and policy reforms are needed to address the economic and social inequalities, both within and between countries. The good news is that such policies do exist and have worked successfully in many parts of the world.

Second, the pressing problem of rising food and energy prices is aggravating inflation in many countries. Rising prices of basic commodities adversely affect the real incomes of poor households, putting progress on poverty reduction and social cohesion at risk. Governments need to implement well designed and well-targeted programs for the poorest and most vulnerable groups, as well as policies to support trade and availability of basic commodities. Medium to long-term measures are needed to improve agriculture productivity and modernize the rural economy, including increased investment in research, rural infrastructure and rural finance.

Third, we have discussed about the risks that climate change and ensuing environmental degradation is posing to rural communities and agricultural development. In this regard, by and large, we note that the current patterns of energy and other natural resource use are not sustainable in developing countries and therefore we must do everything we can to reverse this trend. We have no other choice. Research on how sustainable agricultural development can adapt to the risks posed by climate change is needed, including the capacities and resources to facilitate efforts aimed at adaptation and mitigation.

Fourth, the role of international cooperation in overcoming current food crisis and averting future crisis can be hardly be overemphasized.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Main recommendations that have just been read out and subsequently discussed and adapted by this meeting will be instrumental in guiding the outcome of the 17th session of the CSD. I am sure, the CSD-17 Bureau, now gathered here in Bangkok, will make best use of these recommendations—to steer the intergovernmental discussions towards a successful outcome—giving us a plan of action for sustaining rural livelihoods, averting future food crisis, coping with adversities imposed by climate change, and protecting our natural resource base. If we are able to achieve such an outcome and have the political will to support its implementation, we will be on track to achieve sustainable development in its true spirit.

It has been a privilege to meet with you to reaffirm our collective commitment to sustainable development.

I wish you a safe and pleasant journey home. Thank you.