

**Business and Industry Statement on Drought
Commission on Sustainable Development
Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting to the 17th Session (CSD17)
25 February 2009**

Madame Chairperson, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good afternoon, I am Helen Medina, Director of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Health Care at the US Council for International Business speaking on behalf of the business and industry major group.

Today it is clear that drought is a key challenge for sustainable development, and one likely to be worsened by climate change. Access to water, especially clean water is the foundation of any sustainable community and business especially agriculture. No society, community or business can operate without water. However, this challenge can be met through existing technologies and continued investment in innovation, research and development and must be given priority especially in this challenging economic environment. Business and industry in conjunction with the farmers and scientist groups believe that a broad-based knowledge-centered approach and increased private-public partnerships to addressing challenges such as drought are needed.

Farmers need to be given the tools such as drought-resistant crops, crop varieties that can raise their yields and other tools to mitigate drought. For example, most plant science companies have been working developing drought tolerant crops and in fact drought-resistant corn is expected in less than 5 years. Farmers also need to have increased access to training and knowledge so that they can implement the best practices, such as better use of water resources and generally better management of soil, for their environment. Finally, they also require important information such as weather, drought forecasts and must have access to risk management tools, such as insurance.

In addition to farmers, business and industry will also be impacted by drought. Businesses as users of water resources and services, creators of jobs and products that people need, providers of water related technology, equipment and services, and as a driving force for economic development, have considerable skills and resources to bring to the table. Businesses are committed to creating technological solutions that solve problems and make economic sense. The private sector conducts research, makes innovations and has tangible expertise regarding best practices, efficiency, water conservation and water and waste management and is keen to share these with policy and decision makers.

We believe that the engagement of all stakeholders is essential to develop comprehensive, strategic options to address drought and the impact it will have on the economic and social-well being of society. Business, industry, farmers and scientist groups look forward to working with the available governance, infrastructure, financial, technical, human and operational resources in different communities around the world to address the challenges caused by drought.

Farming First

Safeguarding natural resources - furthering widespread adoption of sustainable practices of water and land use, such as conservation technology.

Sharing knowledge - while much knowledge to improve global agriculture already exists it often does not reach those farmers who could benefit most. Programs like village-based knowledge centre help.

Building local access - fundamental resources should be available to farmers to help them manage their production process more reliably, including mechanical tools, seed, fertilizer, and crop protection.

Protecting harvest - in many of the poorest countries, 20-40% of crop yields are lost because of inadequate pre- and post-harvest support. Likewise, vast quantities of food are squandered during production and consumption phases of the food chain.

Enable access to markets - farmers need to be able to get their products to market and receive equitable price treatment when they do by getting information like up-to-date market pricing even in remote areas.

Prioritise research imperatives - achieving sustainable agriculture requires intensified, continuous research, prioritising locally relevant crops, stewardship techniques, and adaptation to climate change.