

STATEMENT BY MS GERDA VERBURG, MINISTER OF
AGRICULTURE, NATURE AND FOOD QUALITY AND
CHAIRPERSON OF THE 17TH SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AT PANEL DISCUSSION
“TOWARDS A UN COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE TO THE
CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE” AT THE COORDINATION
SEGMENT OF THE ECOSOC, 14 JULY 2009, GENEVA

H.E Mr. Somduth Soborun, Vice President of ECOSOC
Mr. Thomas Stelzer, Assistant Secretary-General, DESA,
Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

I am honored to address the ECOSOC meeting today.
It is pursuing an important and interesting agenda.
Let me join my fellow chairpersons of the Functional Commissions of the
ECOSOC and governing bodies of the UN system organizations in
assuring you of my firm support to the Council's work ahead.

The ECOSOC plays a crucial role in integrating and coordinating the
implementation and follow up of the outcomes of the major UN events.
Together, we represent the broadest range of UN intergovernmental
forums, charged with the mandates to tackle a whole spectrum of
development agenda.
Our combined work will indeed yield greater results and impact.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are living in a world of crises - the food crisis, energy crisis, and more recently, the financial and economic crisis.

At the time when sustainable development was needed the most, it has been hit in its heart.

Let's not forget that we made the commitment to reduce by half the number of people living in poverty by 2015.

The achievement of this first Millennium Development Goal is further away than ever.

One of our biggest challenge is how to feed 9 billion people in 2050.

In a world that is facing multiple crises, including climate change and looming natural resource scarcity, the world economy needs an urgent transition towards a sustainable and resource efficient path.

Distinguished colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Against this backdrop of multiple crises, CSD-17 made important steps forward.

CSD 17 placed agriculture in the heart of the international agenda.

Agriculture is no longer part of the problem but part of the solution.

Agriculture is at the heart of **poverty reduction**. In many developing countries agriculture is the driving force for economic development.

Agriculture is at the heart of **sustainable development**. It is crucial for the conservation and sustainable use of our natural resources.

Agriculture should be at the heart of the **climate change** agenda, especially when we look towards mitigation and adaptation measures.

The last meeting of the G8 clearly underlined this message.

With the Chair's vision ministers clearly stated their vision for a way forward.

We have to focus on increasing our agricultural productivity and doing so in a sustainable way.

Food security requires sustained public and private investments. Private investments by farmers, processors and traders.

Investment by governments, civil society organizations and donors to improve the enabling environment and provide the required public goods, all the way from research to roads.

We have to improve agricultural chain management, market access and social security and safety nets as well.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The CSD 17 outcome document "policy options and practical measures to expedite implementation in agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa" was adopted with consensus. It contains 278 policy measures and actions.

The adoption of this negotiated outcome is of vital importance to accelerate the implementation of sustainable development agenda.

It focuses on the opportunities as well as the challenges faced by our global agricultural system and, especially its importance to the developing world In terms of reducing the menace of poverty and hunger.

It clearly underscores the key message that agriculture is not longer part of the problem, but part of the solution.

Other key messages of CSD-17 are:

Firstly, enhancing the agricultural productivity and food security. There is a need for scaling up public and private investments in sustainable agriculture, of course in a sustainable way.

The importance of transfer of innovative technology, training and developing human capacities, sharing and further developing good agricultural practices and last but not least investing in extension services.

Here we need a paradigm shift in a way we use the latest scientific knowledge and experience. It must take into account the local conditions.

Secondly, to do so we need new and additional resources, public, private, national and international, for strengthening sustainable agriculture, especially in developing countries.

Thirdly, we have to give special attention to make a sustainable green revolution in Africa a reality.

It calls for new, creative and innovative thinking as how to combine best science with farmers' knowledge.

And it must be home-grown.

Fourthly, we have to promote integrated land and water management with focus on Integrated Water Resource Management, Innovation and Implementation.

Improving access to land and sustainable and integrated land use by including principles of sustainability, also for 'ecosystem services'.

The fifth and last key message of CSD 17 is that agriculture should play a more central role in addressing challenges related to climate change, in a Copenhagen Agreed Outcome and Beyond.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the light of the discussion here today I would like to go into this topic in more detail.

Agriculture and climate change are two key cornerstones of a sustainable future.

I believe there is much that can be done to make agriculture and food production generally far more climate friendly and an ally in combating climate change, while also improving the lives and incomes of farmers and perhaps delivering alternative or diversified livelihoods.

Increasing agriculture productivity and efficiency is key to limiting greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture and, at the same time, enhancing our food security.

Some reports suggest that the agricultural sector could be broadly carbon neutral by 2030 if sustainable management practices were widely adopted.

Productivity could be improved by enhanced market access, investment in infrastructure and education, for which developed countries may provide support.

Globally, the **mitigation** potential could be realised at low cost. The challenge here is how to unlock the potential while maintaining a sustained food production capacity.

Mitigation actions to increase soil carbon, for example, can increase resilience against climate-induced stresses and increase productivity in a sustainable way.

Mitigation is one thing, but we must not lose sight of the serious challenges in the form of higher temperatures and drier, or wetter climates that agriculture is confronted with.

Investments in adaptation are key, including, for example, more drought and heat tolerant crops.

If we want a Green Revolution, we need to modernize agriculture by combining the best farmer knowledge with best agricultural science, as well as by promoting good land and water stewardship.

While we need to **adapt** agricultural practices to climate change, there are win-win opportunities for both adaptation and mitigation in agriculture.

Other opportunities include improved agriculture advice and training services, ensuring long-term interest of land managers in sustainable land management, access to credit including micro-credit in developing countries, coordinated regional agriculture-mitigation programs, proactive analysis of traditional practices to enable change.

It is not just what happens down on the farm that echoes to your climate theme—there is a great deal that can be achieved in terms of the distribution, post harvest and consumption of the food we eat.

Food waste, from the farm and the seas to the supermarket and the kitchen, is an area that has been under examined in this regard.

So in conclusion, yes there is great scope for advancing the link between sustainable agriculture and climate change.

But there is a strong argument that in terms of agriculture and food production, action on a broad front - inside but also outside a formal climate agreement in Copenhagen and beyond - could have significant climate benefits.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As an international development community we must strive for synergy, cooperation and partnerships, within the UN system and between the UN and member countries.

An integrated approach is needed to achieve our internationally agreed goals for food security, reducing poverty and the sustainable use of our ecosystems, particularly in relation to climate change.

The United Nations system has a crucial role to play in assisting Member States to **implement** the policy recommendations to which we agree.

And we need the UN to support Member States in a **coherent** and **integrated** way.

Furthermore, involvement of all stakeholders on all levels and especially civil society is needed to promote partnerships for sustainable development, including public-private partnerships, to advance integrated management of natural resources.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude, we know that we have significant work ahead of us.

It is time to act, it is time to put the words of CSD 17 into action.

Only together we can assure that our common aspirations for the implementation of a fundamentally changed agricultural policy and green economy can become a reality for the benefit of our children and grand children.

Thank you.