



**COUNCIL OF
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NOTE

from : General Secretariat
to : Delegations

Subject : Seventeenth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development
(CSD 17) (New York, 4-15 May 2009)
- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find annexed a note from the Presidency on the above subject, which will be dealt with under "other business" at the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 25 June 2009.

Seventeenth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 17)

(New York, 4 to 15 May 2009)

- Information from the Presidency -

The 17th session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-17) was an important event on the international sustainable development agenda, which took place at a time of multiple crises concerning food, energy, water scarcity and economic security. CSD-17 addressed the options for expediting the implementation of sustainable development goals in agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification, Africa, cross-cutting issues and interlinkages.

The CSD-17 session was characterized by the complexity of the approaches of the negotiating groups and states. Thanks to the dynamic leadership of the CSD-17 Chairperson, the Netherlands' Minister for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Ms Gerda Verburg, the demanding negotiations were completed on time by adoption of compromise policy decisions supported by all the negotiating partners.

The adoption of negotiated outcomes is of vital importance for the sustainable development agenda. Firstly, it demonstrates the necessary political will on the part of the major negotiating partners to reach an agreement at global level. Secondly, it strengthens the credibility of the CSD, which was widely discussed after the failure of negotiations in 2007. This successful seventeenth policy session undoubtedly gives a further positive impetus to the CSD, which is a unique forum within the UN system, the only global interactive meeting place where governments and non-governmental actors from various sectors can address global sustainable development issues in an integrated manner.

The EU considers it crucial that a strong message on sustainable agriculture is embedded in the policy decisions. Measures to enhance food security, food quality and safety are to be taken, while at the same time strengthening the environmental dimension in agricultural management and the protection of ecosystem services. In this regard, the outcomes of CSD-17 integrate agriculture, climate change, biodiversity protection, and land and water resources issues in a balanced way. Furthermore, an essential part of the policy decisions is devoted to sustainable rural development, with an emphasis on increasing the quality of life in rural areas, including active promotion of sustainable forest management.

The EU actively supported policy decisions on the sustainable production of biofuels and the enhancement of further international cooperation in this area to eliminate negative impacts on the environment and to stop the depletion of natural resources, particularly land and water resources. From the point of view of the EU, the sustainability criteria for biofuels which were adopted in December 2008 and are now part of EC legislation can be used to encourage others to follow a similar path.

With regard to climate change, which was seen as an important interlinking issue within the CSD-17 thematic cluster, the EU notes with satisfaction that the outcomes reflect the need for effective adaptation measures in relation to the development of rural areas, land use management, drought management and sustainable development in African countries.

The EU considers it fundamental that agreement has been reached on promoting cooperation and coordination among the Rio Conventions (UN Convention to Combat Desertification, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity) to ensure effective mitigation of the impacts of drought and combat desertification more efficiently.

The EU, as a major official development assistance donor, confirmed its will to continue to cooperate intensively with Africa using a number of existing tools based on the principles of sustainability. The EU therefore welcomes the policy decisions on revitalizing and promoting sustainable agriculture in Africa, which is key for poverty and hunger eradication and reduction of environmental degradation. Moreover, strengthening good governance at all levels, implementing pro-poor economic policies, deepening democracy, protecting human rights and strengthening the active participation of civil society and other major stakeholders will substantially contribute to sustainable development of the region.

To facilitate the adoption of policy decisions at CSD-17, the Presidency organized a large number of outreach meetings with the main negotiating partners.

The Czech Presidency regards the CSD-17 session as a successful event, which all stakeholders can use to speed up implementation of commitments taken in the relevant thematic areas and which clearly opens the way for further improvements in the work of the CSD.