



STATEMENT BY MR. SUDHIR MITAL, JOINT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS, DURING THE OPENING PLENARY MEETING OF THE SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ON MAY 05, 2008

Mr. Chairman,

Please accept my delegation's congratulations on your election as the Chairperson of the 16th Session of the CSD and that of the Bureau Members. At the outset, let me state that we associate ourselves with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of G-77.

Mr. Chairman,

We have heard with great interest your opening remarks this morning and we are confident that under your able and untiring guidance, we would move ahead in fulfilling our common but differentiated obligations and commitments as reaffirmed in the Rio Conventions by taking ahead the issues identified in the Secretary General's Report on the Thematic Clusters for Agriculture, Rural Development, Land, Desertification, Drought and Africa.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the need for special focus by the international community on the particular problems faced by Small Island Developing States and Africa. We welcome the special sessions devoted during CSD-16 to these issues, which will provide an opportunity to discuss these issues in detail. I would like to reiterate India's continued commitment of support to their efforts for achieving sustainable development. In this context I wish to make special mention of the recent India -Africa Summit held in New Delhi last month.

Mr. Chairman,

Sustainable Development concerns in the sense of enhancement of human well-being are recurring themes in the Indian development philosophy. India's National Environment Policy adopted in 2006 synthesizes these concerns by simultaneously

recognizing the right to development with environmental protection, environmental standards setting, the Precautionary Approach and the equity and economic efficiency principles of development.

Mr. Chairman,

The performance of large number of countries reflects the strength of their economy and the dynamism of their population in many areas. Yet, large number of people continue to live far below the minimum standards of human well-being and have access to limited basic services such as health, clean drinking water and sanitation. The new developmental vision of India, therefore, emphasizes faster, more broad-based and inclusive growth. Intensified interventions for rural development and robust agricultural growth have been targeted, which also seek to reduce disparities across regions and communities. This vision also recognizes gender as a cross cutting theme across all sectors and commits to respect and promote the rights of common person. The recognition of access to information and work as human rights has further strengthened the resolve of sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

The thematic clusters of CSD-16 are at the core of fighting poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The thematic cluster of agriculture also cuts across many of these themes, as rural development and sustainable land management are largely dependent upon agriculture in many developing countries including India. However, this sector has languished in the past mainly due to inadequate capital formation and trade regimes which have not favoured the poor. Balanced global trade architecture is essential for sustainable agriculture and water and land management. The CSD should support the international efforts for just and fair trade and development order as an enabling condition for the conservation of national and global public goods. It will ensure that agriculturists, landless labour and marginal sections of rural communities in the developing world do not fall below poverty line.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, we reaffirm our commitment to the Rio Declaration, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing Development, the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-10, and the Mauritius Strategy for the SIDS, and hope that the deliberations of CSD-16 will further accelerate these process in our pursuit to sustainable development.

Thank you.

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