



Intervention by Mr. B. Pradhan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development of India during the thematic discussions at CSD-16 on "LAND" on May 07, 2008

Mr. Chairman,

India welcomes the Secretary General's report clearly identifying challenges that need to be addressed for sustainable and efficient land management, such as strengthening capacities of communities, adapting land use planning technologies, and improving provisioning of data.

Mr. Chairman,

India accounts for about 2.4 per cent of the global land area and nearly 4 percent of the global water resources, but supports about 17 per cent of the global human population and 15 per cent of global livestock population. Accordingly, the land and water resources of the country are under considerable strain.

Mr. Chairman,

Land is intricately linked to the issue of livelihoods and overall efforts to address poverty. As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, land degradation in all its forms poses a serious threat to economic development, food security and rural livelihoods. Land degradation can be arrested, even reversed, but it requires concerted, long term investment and sustainable land management practices. In this regard, India's National Environment policy balances increasing pressure on land for industrial development and urbanization with stringent regulations for maintaining minimum environmental standards and safeguarding existing ecological features of land.

Mr. Chairman,

India recognizes that the human and natural resources development objectives have to be synergized with each other if the complex issue of sustainable land management and development is to be addressed in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Therefore, a new vision of natural hydro geographical units consisting of cluster of micro

watersheds has been taken as the unit of developmental planning under the Common Watershed Guidelines 2008 that would govern the implementation of the major schemes in the rural development, agriculture and forestry sectors. The issue of livelihoods has been incorporated in this vision at the planning stage itself, rather than as an add-on after the physical works have been completed.

Mr. Chairman,

India has also adopted a strategy to encourage adoption of land use practices, based on modern science as well as on traditional knowledge. This involves emphasis on research and development, extension of knowledge, pilot scale demonstrations and large scale disseminations, and where necessary, access to institutional finance. Further, agrarian reforms have remained at the core of rural reconstruction for ensuring social justice to actual tillers and landless rural poor.

Mr. Chairman,

It has been our endeavor to utilize the advances in IT for the betterment of lands and livelihoods. For example, India has taken a major initiative for computerization of land records. We also recognize the importance of the rights of the disadvantaged sections to common lands in order to prevent land degradation. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 seeks to recognize the right of local communities in common property resource management and the right to hold land for private cultivation. Also, the recently enacted Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy mandates a comprehensive rehabilitation package, as well as social impact assessment, before considering any project that may lead to displacement of communities.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we would like to highlight that issue of sustainable development and management of lands is largely local in nature. In recognition of this, India has encouraged decentralization of regulatory and developmental measures relating to land, rather than promote a centralized approach. We believe that in its efforts, the international community will be guided by this principle.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your attention.

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