



Misión Permanente de Costa Rica ante las Naciones Unidas

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**STATEMENT BEFORE THE SECOND COMMITTEE – SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
DATE: OCTOBER 20th, 2004
BY: CINTHIA SOTO- SECOND SECRETARY**

Mr. Chairman:

We wish to align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the G-77 and China.

Mr. Chairman:

In Costa Rica, we are convinced that in order to achieve **sustainable development**, all actors from society and the international community must be involved. Costa Rica has expressed its commitment to sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and we have taken our international commitments very seriously, adopting internal changes in order to accomplish them, which we are certain will translate into a better quality of life for our citizens.

Our country is aware that to attain a high level of development, we need to protect, conserve and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources. Costa Rica has 5% of world's biodiversity, but occupies 0.03% of the planet's landmasses. The country has ratified a large number of international, regional and sub-regional environmental legal instruments on climatic change, biodiversity, desertification, law of the sea, ozone layer and forests, among others. Nationally, 25% of our territory has been declared a protected area, and a series of institutions and laws seeking to create a balance between environmental protection and poverty reduction policies have been introduced. A project on Environmental Guaranties is currently in Congress. If approved, it will become part of our Constitution.

At the same time, the country is developing a national consensus on the formulation of a National Strategy for Environmental Management, which we hope will channel efforts and resources more effectively. We have also initiated reforms in the management and development of water resources.

Our per capita supply of water is one of the highest in the world, and access to water is nearly universal. However, the treatment of all wastewater remains a challenge, made greater by population growth and concentration in the main cities.

This is also why, in the National Strategy for Environmental Management, the issue of human settlements is being seriously considered, and the National Plan for Urban Development is being updated. Clearly, **water, sanitation and human settlements** are interrelated issues. Like the majority of developing countries, Costa Rica requires significant investments in these three areas, and they should be among the priorities considered when deciding how resources should be allocated to key areas, such as education and health.

Mr. Chairman:

Considering the importance that our country has assigned to these three issues, our delegation has high expectations for the upcoming session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 13), to be held in New York in April 2005, and that will conclude with the implementation cycle, specifically with a policy session on the three topics mentioned above. We hope that this session truly promotes effective implementation, where practical options are considered, and there is a commitment to and support for developing countries, particularly in terms of technology transfer and capacity building, and where one of the main obstacles to implementation of the international agenda of sustainable development is carefully examined, that is, **financial sustainability**.

According to CSD 11, in the sessions on review and policy, specific actions should be taken in order to overcome the obstacles that hinder implementation of the agreements. Both sessions are also a valuable opportunity to share lessons learned and best practices.

In this regard, we would like to share that Costa Rica has decided to utilize its natural resources to obtain financing and reinvest it in sustainable development schemes. We have designed innovative ways to financially recognize the people and private companies that make efforts to protect the environment, such as the **Environmental Services Payment**, or instruments such as a “canon for disposals” [“canon por vertidos”], where the polluter pays, which allow for better control over the sources of waste, this goes in line with Principle 16 of Rio Declaration. Methodologies for placing an economic value on water are also being updated, incorporating criteria such as the cost of protecting water resources in its price, and ensuring adequate quality levels based on the intended use of the water.

Mr. Chairman:

The **Environmental Services Payment** is an economic instrument aimed at those individuals involved in activities such as reforestation, conservation and preservation of the forest cover. The value of these environmental services, such as water protection and mitigation of gas emissions, among others, and the need to charge for them, are relatively new concepts in the world. Costa Rica has become a pioneer in developing and applying financial mechanisms to charge and pay for these services.

Through this Program, private and public resources have been mobilized. A number of private companies, such as hydroelectric power producers and ecotourism businesses, currently contribute to the Program, since their continued success depends on sustainable use by **all** users of the natural resources they profit from. In this way, small and medium-sized forests' owners have benefited by receiving funds for sustainable management of their properties. Thus, the Program has had the effect of redistributing wealth and fighting poverty.

With the purpose of analyzing this and other innovative financial alternatives, mainly with respect to sustainable forest management, Costa Rica will be organizing a country-led initiative during the first semester of next year. We hope that experts from all over the world will participate in the initiative, and that the outcome will result in contributions for the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-5).

We would like to remind you that Costa Rica is also hosting the Second International Expert Meeting on Sustainable Consumption and Production to be held in September 2005, as part of the follow up to the call in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, which established, as one of its objectives, the development of a series of 10-year programs to support regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production, and as part of the request of the Marrakech Process for biannual international expert meetings.

Mr. Chairman:

Finally, my country is deeply concerned about the destructive practices going on in the marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, specifically high seas bottom trawling, which is very harmful to deep-sea marine biodiversity and to vulnerable marine ecosystems. We are convinced that we should avoid this practice if there is no legal instrument that regulates it, and in this regard we support the adoption of a moratorium in all oceans and seas, while such an instrument is being negotiated. We remain also very concerned about the excessive harvesting of shark fins, which puts in danger this marine species.

Thank you.