

Seventeenth Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development

**Statement by the President of ECOSOC
H.E. Ambassador Sylvie Lucas**

May 13th 2009, New York

Mr. Secretary-General,
Mrs. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am most honored to address the opening of the High-level Segment of the 17th Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development. Let me assure you of the full support of the Economic and Social Council for the work of the Commission to advance the global agenda on sustainable development.

Sustainable development provides a key element of the overarching framework for our work on development, addressing the economic, social and environmental dimensions in an integrated manner. Recognizing this importance, the Council focused on sustainable development last year, the second theme to be chosen for its newly instituted Annual Ministerial Review. In their Ministerial Declaration, the Ministers recognized the critical role of this Commission.

The themes that you are focusing on during this cycle, agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa, bring together some of the most pressing development issues affecting the lives of millions of individuals.

Seventy-five percent of the world's poor live in rural areas and most of them depend directly on agriculture. The poor were the first to be affected by the food crisis, which added 115 million people to the ranks of hunger in 2007 and 2008. Early indications are that the economic and financial crisis could bring the total number of hungry past one billion.

Global warming, increasing energy consumption and declining natural resources are now exacerbating these trends, adding to the sense of urgency.

From the discussions that took place during CSD-16 and preparatory meetings for CSD-17, several issues strike me as being of critical importance.

First, current agricultural practices will not allow us to meet the food needs and consumption patterns of a growing and developing world population, let alone in a sustainable way. Investments in new technologies are needed to support a shift toward a more sustainable agricultural and food production system.

Secondly, Africa in particular has suffered from decades of waning agricultural productivity and investment. The Windhoek Declaration, endorsed by African Ministers in February, is an important step in achieving food security in Africa, as it calls for a true Green Revolution that will help lift rural communities out of poverty, while increasing agricultural productivity in an environmentally sustainable way.

Thirdly, sustainable land management is also critical to rural development and agricultural productivity, as well as overall environmental stewardship. Where climate change has already begun to exacerbate water stress and desertification, adaptation measures need to be integrated into management schemes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Such multidimensional challenges require an integrated approach combining economic, social and environmental solutions.

We see that the Commission for Sustainable Development is uniquely placed to take on this challenge, as the very aim of sustainable development is to apply this integrated approach. It provides an effective platform to bring together and foster dialogue between Governments, the United Nations System, the policy research community and Major Groups. I trust that this session will produce clear deliverables and concrete actions to learn lessons from the global food crisis and tackle the hunger and malnutrition challenge, within the sustainable development framework.

The Commission's outcome will also provide important inputs and inform the discussions at the Council's substantive session in July in Geneva. At its High-level segment, the Council will focus on global public health during the Annual Ministerial Review and on current global and national trends and their impact on social development, including health, in its thematic discussion.

The Council welcomes furthermore the input of the Commission to the work of its Coordination segment, which will consider the UN system's role in the implementation of the 2008 Ministerial Declaration on "implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development". In that regard, the Commission's recommendations to advance rural development will be of particular importance.

I look forward to the discussions and to your decisions that will foster the implementation of the United Nations development agenda.

Thank you.