



United States Department of State

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UN Commission on Sustainable Development, 16-17  
Intervention for General Plenary  
May 5, Morning Session

Check Against Delivery

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Good morning. The challenges that we face in the thematic topics of agriculture, rural development, drought and desertification, land, and Africa, are challenges of life and death. They are challenges that impact all countries especially the most vulnerable.

Increasing demands for food and farm products are driving up prices and increasing shortages. The UN World Food Program has issued new calls for support to meet increasing demand at a time of increasing prices. Secretary Rice has said “there are many causes for the rising food prices, from fast-growing demand to devastating droughts to record high fuel costs. But one thing is clear: This is a current emergency, it has long-term global challenges, and the United States is responding accordingly. In recent years, the United States has consistently provided more than half of all food aid worldwide. We are now taking further steps. The President has pledged to provide an additional \$200 Million to meet unanticipated needs.”

[www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/04/103672.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/04/103672.htm)

Since those remarks President Bush has called on Congress “to provide an additional \$770 million to support food aid and development programs. Together this amounts to nearly \$1 billion in new funds to support global food security. And with other food security assistance programs already in place, we’re now projected to spend nearly \$5 billion in 2008 and 2009 to fight global hunger.”

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/05/20080501-23.html>

How will we meet the long term challenges in a sustainable way? Answering this question is our task for the next two weeks and for the next year. We are here to share our experiences, to share the best practices of our successes, and the lessons learned from our mistakes. We need to identify real world solutions that increase the food supply while protecting the environment and strengthening communities. We need to identify

share, duplicate, and adapt solutions that improve rural livelihoods and use the land as efficiently as possible.

To achieve our sustainable development in the CSD thematic areas we need to reinforce three fundamental building blocks.

- First, good science research and education focused on solutions.
- Second, mechanisms to exchange information and ideas between scientists and decisions makers, including farmers and land managers. We need ways to identify real world constraints and challenges to scientists and to get science-based solutions into the hands of practitioners, farmers, and land managers.
- Finally, an enabling environment so farmers, managers and communities have the tools and the incentives to develop in a sustainable way.

In the United States, we are firmly committed to finding scientific solutions that are adapted to local conditions. We are committed to education and research. Every year universities in the United States award over 15,000 graduate degrees to students in agriculture, rural development, and natural resource management fields, including over a thousand to foreign students. Scientific solutions are also critical to increasing the productivity of our agricultural lands. As demands increase to convert agricultural lands for non-agricultural uses we need to increase productivity or lose wild lands and biodiversity that should be protected. We need to use our best science, tools and technologies, including genetically modified organisms, where appropriate, to optimize the efficiency and productivity of agricultural land and meet increasing demands.

Information and solutions must get into the hands of producers and land managers, and their constraints need to feedback to the research bench. Investments in training, capacity building and mechanisms of information dispersal are critical to success. We should take advantage of developments in technology to stretch our resources nationally and globally. The internet can make resources assembled in one country available to others and our new eXtension programs will facilitate the use of extension information from the entire U.S. land grant university system to users around the world. In the United States we have programs, such as the ATTRA, which answer questions on sustainable agriculture from throughout the United States. In regions with limited resources, such a program can use radio and cell phone technologies to answer basic questions on agriculture.

Empowering stakeholders takes many forms. We need to build policies that support land and resource ownership. Farmers need access to technologies and markets so they have an incentive to improve their lands and resources and develop them sustainably. Empowerment also includes policies and programs to support the development of agricultural cooperatives, and encourage rural youth groups like the 4-H clubs in the United States dedicated to improving rural life and knowledge. Communities that

participate in their own development show a greater chance of success than those that do not.

During the coming weeks, we will be describing in our interventions, side events and learning centers some of the programs that have been successful in the United States and in our development assistance programs. I encourage you to join in those activities and learn more about some very practical programs. I also encourage all of you to check out the U.S. National Report and look at the case studies distributed with our interventions. It is a compilation of representative, CSD-relevant programs and projects in which the U.S. government is involved.

I also encourage you all to participate in the City and Farm Linkages Showcase next weekend which includes a reception on Friday evening, a choice of various agriculture related field trips on Saturday and a learning fair on Sunday.

The CSD is a critical forum for sustainable development. It is a leader in the UN system through its involvement of major groups and its focus on partnerships as well as its emphasis on actions that improve peoples' lives and protect the environment. Our success should be measured by how well we use these special attributes of CSD to advance our shared interest in promoting sustainable development. I wish us all the greatest success.