



**PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
TO THE UN ORGANISATIONS FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

**STATEMENT OF H.E. GERDA VERBURG
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OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS**

**21ST SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
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**Opening Statement by Ms. Gerda Verburg, Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Chairperson of the 17th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-17)
at the FAO Commission on Agriculture
Rome, 23 April 2009**

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is an honor and pleasure for me to be here at the FAO Commission on Agriculture. I am here in my capacity as Chairperson of the 17th session of the Commission for Sustainable Development.
- Both this Committee and the Commission on Sustainable Development are meeting at a critical juncture. The world is facing multiple crises in the form of poverty, food crisis, economic recession, environmental degradation and climate change. Which are threatening world's population in its existence.
- Global policy makers have great responsibility during the upcoming session of the CSD to come up with innovative policies and solutions in overcome these crises. This will be critical to help the affected population in developing countries, especially the most vulnerable ones who are the hardest hit by present crises.

What are the problems?

- You probably know the facts.
We live in a world in which the average income per capita is higher than any time in the past.
Enough food is being produced to feed everyone!
And yet nearly a billion people still live on less than \$ 1 dollar a day. Most of them depend on agriculture for their daily livelihoods. And more than 800 million people are suffering from hunger and malnutrition.
- Worldwide our governments made the commitment to reduce the number of people living in poverty by 50% in 2015.
The achievement of this first Millennium Development Goal is further away than ever.
- In today's unfavorable context of financial turmoil and high food prices, there is a general view that food prices would ease during this year.
The bad news is that the food prices will most likely remain well above their pre-2007 level. Also their volatility will even get higher.
- There are a number of causes for the high food prices, such as less available farm land, droughts, growing demand for bio-fuels and changing consumption patterns.
But one overarching message is clear: we have neglected agriculture too much for too many years.
- At the same time we are confronted with ever rising trends in energy consumption and climate change.

thinking.

But, moreover it calls for concrete deliverables and actions to be implemented.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Looking at CSD-17, I am motivated by all the challenges we face; in agriculture, rural development, drought, water, land, the food crisis.
My deepest hope is that countries will make the sustainable agricultural and rural development agenda central to achieving sustainable development and reducing poverty.
This CSD should aim at providing not only concrete and tangible solutions, but even more focus on concrete deliverables.
- In my opinion answers and solutions can be found along a five track approach. They will be helpful in addressing the issues and challenges faced by agricultural development, water management and rural livelihoods.
- First and foremost, we have to respond by *substantially investing more in sustainable agriculture* again, especially in Africa.
Capacity building, research, training and extension services should be one of the pillars of a green revolution.
Here we need a paradigm shift in a way that you can make use of the application of the latest scientific knowledge and experience. But, made available based on local conditions.
- Secondly, by *creating an enabling environment*. At the end only the private sector can do it.
Entrepreneurship should be the focus.
Governments should set conditions and frameworks for attracting private investments.
- Thirdly, by *developing sustainable production chains*. Developing a safe and sustainable food chain, from production, processing and marketing to us as consumers.
- Fourthly, by *improving market access*, especially for developing countries. Not only developing local and regional markets, but also providing more market access for products from developing countries.
- The fifth track is *food security and emergency food aid*. For example via enhanced safety nets for the most vulnerable people and increased lending possibilities, for example via micro credits.
- As a last issue I would like to focus on the role of *governance*. Governments can and should take a leading role in facilitating and promoting sustainable technological innovations. For instance through investing more in public-private partnerships.
- In order to ensure a long-term response, the goals of poverty eradication, food security and sustainable natural resource management need to be seen as inter-linked and addressed in a more coherent manner.

- These three interactive ministerial round tables will be organized on the following themes:
 - Responding to Food Crisis through Sustainable Development,
 - Realizing Green Revolution in Africa, and
 - Integrated Management of Land and Water Resources for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development.

Outcomes of these round tables will lead to a shared vision to advance the agenda of sustainable agriculture and rural development.

- Other innovations include: dialogues of ministers with the major groups; with the policy research community; and jointly with the heads of UN agencies and heads of Governing Councils/Executive Boards of UN Organizations where mutual cooperation will be discussed.

- Let me emphasize that, in the midst of multiple crises being faced today, we need to become even more determined to advance the implementation of sustainable development agenda.

This requires us to bring the principles of sustainable development at the heart of our efforts.

And we need to work strongly on translating commitments into concrete measures and actions.

- Having briefed you on the CSD process, I would very much like to hear from you how we can enhance cooperation, so that the CSD outcome can be used in your work. At the same time I would like to receive feedback from you on the lessons learned in implementing various policy measures.

Such a process will not only enrich the global policy formulation process on sustainable development issues, but will speed up the implementation of these decisions.

- Only together we can assure that our common aspirations for the implementation of a fundamentally changed agricultural policy and green economy can become a reality for the benefit of our children and grand children.

- Swords into ploughshares, words into action!

Thank you.