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**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF
THE PRE- CSD 17th STAKEHOLDERS FORUM ON THE THEMATIC AREAS OF
AGRICULTURE, LAND, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, DROUGHT AND
DESERTIFICATION IN AFRICA HELD AT PETRUS HOTEL, AGATU CLOSE,
AREA 11 GARKI ABUJA NIGERIA 7TH APRIL 2009**

Introduction

Women Environmental Programme (WEP) on April 7th 2009 at Petrus Hotel Abuja organized a Pre-CSD Stakeholders Forum on the thematic areas of Agriculture, Land, Rural Development, Drought and Desertification, and Africa.

The forum brought together over 40 representation from the Nigerian Major Groups, civil society groups, scientists, government ministries and agencies both from state and national levels, UN-HABITAT, academics, media practitioners, representatives of community based groups, to come out with key recommendations and messages for negotiation at CSD 17 billed to be held in the month of May at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

During the forum presentations and discussions made pushed for fundamental approaches that should underpin policies on Agriculture, Land, Rural Development, Drought, and Desertification in Nigeria. The underpinning rationale was that these approaches should provide the overarching framework for policies around the current CSD themes to ensure that sustainable development promotes equity, social and environmental justice, and political empowerment of the people. The forum came out with the following general recommendations:

1. Rights-based approaches to development, including the right to food, right to self-determination, right of people to determine their own policies that protect food security, environmental quality and livelihoods, and adoption of land and agrarian reform policies within a human rights framework.
2. Adoption of food sovereignty as the key concept for decision-making about resource use and trade policies.
3. Shift to policies that meet the needs of the poor.
4. Recognition of the right of small-scale producers and farmers, fisherfolks, pastoralists and indigeous peoples to directly participate in ethically-based

- decision-making processes and resource management, organize collectively, and full access to justice and redress.
5. Changing and stopping unsustainable patterns of production and consumption to foster fundamental change.
 6. National and international policy coherence to implement sustainable development.
 7. Increase awareness and knowledge on the impacts of climate change, mitigating, coping and adaptive strategies within Africa.

Participants identified the following policy options and actions under the different thematic areas of Agriculture, Land, Rural Development, Drought, and Desertification that promote sustainability which need to be mainstreamed at the national and international levels:

1. AGRICULTURE

- a. Promotion of agro ecological approaches to food production, and creation and expansion of local or regional infrastructure, markets and networks that benefit smallholders, including organic agriculture, sustainable livestock production, diversified production, and crops that are water- and energy-efficient, and under local control.
- b. Technology transfer that uses appropriate and indigenous knowledge systems involves shared ownership and control and comprehensive multi-stakeholder assessment of desirability.
- c. Recognition of local knowledge and fair compensation for local people for financial gains that accrue from R&D that uses seeds, breeds or locally-generated technologies.
- d. Promotion of community-based practices, such as the use of stress-tolerant local varieties and reforestation, which are invaluable for climate change adaptation.

2. LAND

- a. Agrarian reform that secures tenure for small-scale farmers, tillers and indigenous peoples, especially women. Agrarian reform should integrate the worldview on territory of peasants, the landless, indigenous peoples, fisher folk nomadic pastoralists, minorities, displaced peoples, etc., and must allow women access to and jurisdiction over land and natural resources and guarantee their representation in decision-making.
- b. Agrarian reform must be complemented by adequate support services.
- c. Recognition of the socio-environmental functions of land, sea and natural resources in the context of food sovereignty.
- d. Guarantee access to land and ownership of natural resources by both men and women, securing local control of vital livelihood factors.
- e. Transparent and inclusive processes in the development of land policies that are people-centered, recognize diverse tenurial systems, and involve innovative and accessible systems of recognition of land rights of both men and women.
- f. Sustainable land management and agro ecological strategies centered on peasant and family agricultural and artisan fishing.

- g. Recognition of the fundamental role of women in agriculture, and natural resource use and management.
- h. Implement short and long term use strategies and spatial planning strategies.
- i. Reduce coastal erosion and land losses caused by sea level rise.

3. RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- a. Agriculture is the base of rural development as it is essential in creating employment thereby reducing the rural- urban migration as common among youths.
- b. Demand-driven rural development policies and interventions that promote the sustainable use of water, land, forest and fisheries resources and maintain biodiversity.
- c. Comprehensive and inclusive water resources management to address conflicting water uses and demands emerging especially from irrigated agriculture.
- d. Community-based extension that values and supports traditional knowledge systems and networks, with training of local farmer-to-farmer extension agents, including women
- e. Infrastructure and market development that incorporate participatory mechanisms and promote affordable technological choices and innovations by farmers.
- f. Education and training programs to rural youth that develop their learning capabilities and encourage them to invest in their own communities.

4. DROUGHT

- a. Drought mitigation strategies that identify the most vulnerable, determine the reasons for vulnerability, prioritize factors that can be addressed in the short-, medium- and long-term, and integrate action into the broader development agenda.
- b. Comprehensive land use involving carefully-planned crop rotation that minimizes erosion and uses less water-dependant crops in drier years, sustainable agricultural practices, rainwater harvesting, water recycling, appropriate water restrictions, etc.
- c. Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) as the main international instrument to address land degradation, drought and desertification.
- d.** Increase National risk Reduction Strategies through strengthening relevant agencies and using participatory approaches for sustainability.

5. DESERTIFICATION

- a. Policies that will curtail the fast spread of desertification in the affected parts of the country.
- b. Evaluation of the costs of not preventing degradation in dry lands, i.e. of inaction.
- c. Increased collaboration between all actors involved in development projects in dry lands, combined with increased investment.

Conclusion

At the end of the stakeholder's forum, participants resolved to stand by the recommendations so as to have a common view at the CSD in New York.

The communiqué was adopted by all participants present and signed on behalf of the participants by:

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