



AUSTRALIA



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Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the 17th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

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Statement by Mr Dean Merrilees Head of the Australian Delegation

(Check against delivery)

Madam Chair and distinguished delegates. Australia welcomes this important opportunity to focus on the themes of agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. The effects of the current global food and financial crises, in addition to the challenges posed by climate change, make discussion of these themes all the more timely.

Australia places a high priority on improving on-ground operation of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). This can best be achieved through countries pursuing practical outcomes that are consistent with international obligations, and that allow countries the flexibility to pursue policies according to their national settings. Good governance, action at the national level and effective partnerships are all critical to improving practical implementation of sustainable development.

A priority for Australia in the context of sustainable development is to address the issue of food security. Australia recognises the importance of this issue to all countries, but particularly to those struggling to deal with hunger and poverty. Australia will continue to help those countries most in need. In 2008, Australia provided a World Bank trust fund with A\$50 million to stimulate agricultural production and A\$30 million to help the World Food Programme's Extraordinary Emergency Appeal cope with higher prices.

Australia also considers that improving market efficiency will contribute to both global food security and sustainable development. Australia encourages the international community to

take strong steps towards achieving this by liberalising international agricultural trade and reforming markets. Now is not the time to retreat to protectionist measures. Trade liberalisation would free up the movement of food across the world and help to feed vulnerable populations. Reaching an early agreement in the WTO's Doha Round will be a very important step. We encourage all countries to participate constructively in multilateral efforts aimed at achieving real reform of international trade.

In the longer term, Australia considers that one of the most effective ways of improving food security is through gains in agricultural productivity. In this regard, Australia supports agricultural research and development, and innovation and technology transfer systems.

As we strive to improve food security, a related priority is to maintain environmental sustainability over the long term. Changes in climate will make this even more of a challenge. The recent severe bushfires and floods experienced in parts of Australia are examples of these challenges. In recognising this, in our own country, Australia is now implementing its 'Caring for our Country' initiative, which seeks to achieve an Australian environment that is healthy, better protected, well-managed and resilient, and provides essential ecosystem services in a changing climate. Australia is also integrating adaptation responses into agricultural and natural resource management policies and programs.

Addressing food security will also require new investment in rural development in developing countries. In that regard, the Australian Government is developing a multi-year food security initiative that will increase investment in agricultural research and development. It will also help developing countries to address their specific market failures and develop appropriate social protection measures.

Australia believes that addressing the challenges posed by climate change, the impacts on food prices and the current economic downturn through improved agricultural productivity and international market reform is essential to effective implementation of the JPOI. Australia is committed to advancing these issues through the work of CSD this week and into the future.

Thank you.