

**Statement by Ms. Gerda Verburg, Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food**  
**Commission on Sustainable Development Quality of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and**  
**Chairperson of the 17th Session of the CSD (CSD-17)**

**At the closure of the**  
**High Level Meeting “African Agriculture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Meeting the Challenges,**  
**Making a Sustainable Green Revolution”, Windhoek, Namibia, 9-10 February 2009**

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Your Excellency Ms. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Mr. Sha Zukang, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It has been a great honor and pleasure for me to be here over the last two days in my capacity as the Chairperson for the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development.
  
- I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to the government of Namibia and the co-organizer of this High Level Meeting, UNDESA, for the excellent way you organized this work and the way how you conducted your work.  
Also you, delegates and participants, deserve gratitude for your hard work and excellent results.
  
- Swords into ploughshares, words into action I said to you at the opening.  
With this UN motto I was asking you to go beyond generalities and to go beyond agreed language at CSD 16 during this High Level meeting.  
Only when we can come forward with concrete deliverables and concrete action we achieve food security and achieve Millennium Development Goal 1: to reduce by half the number of people living in poverty by 2015.
  
- I welcome the Windhoek High-Level Ministerial Declaration. You made great steps forward to set a more action oriented African Agenda to promote and invest in sustainable agricultural and development in Africa.

I also welcome de Windhoek Major Group Statement. Only joined efforts, governments and Major Groups, shoulder to shoulder can make it happen.

I challenge you to arrive in New York with a joined Agenda for Africa with concrete deliverables and actions for each country in Africa.

- Yes, we need a Green Revolution.

Yes, it has to be an unique and innovative African Green Revolution. Africa is and should be in charge itself. It must be homegrown.

African leaders can and have to make the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty make a reality. You can make history.

With leadership I am also referring to leadership in entrepreneurship of the African farmers and leadership of Major Groups.

- Yes, you should get support for your Green Revolution from the international community, especially the developed countries.

They have to live up to their promises.

They can and may not use the global economic crises as an excuse to pull back on the promises they made.

- Let us not underestimate the challenges we are facing.

Realizing an African Green Revolution needs modernizing African Agriculture using the best farmer knowledge and the best agricultural science. Some spoke of the need of leap-frogging.

An African Green Revolution can only be achieved if it is done in a sustainable way through the sustainable use of your natural resources.

You have to face the competing claims for water and energy.

- Revolution calls for revolution in ideas, revolution in technologies, revolution in policies, market access and financial means. It calls for new, creative and innovative thinking.

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

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

- After these two days I am optimistic. In the discussions I have heard excellent ideas and saw many proposed actions.  
You and we are on the right track to make it happen
- As I said at the opening we can make the Green Revolution happen along a five track approach. Your recommendations are also going into that direction.
- And let me be absolutely clear. When I refer to agriculture I mean livestock, crops, fisheries and eco-tourism!
- First and foremost, we have to respond by *substantially investing more in sustainable agriculture* again.  
African agriculture has great potential. This potential must be unlocked in ways that allow countries to increase their national and household food security.  
In many African countries the productivity can and should be considerably improved in a sustainable way. A sustainable green revolution should be applied to the specific conditions of Africa. This should be done by sharing knowledge, technology transfer and capacity building. A paradigm shift is needed here.  
In this respect we also have to recognize the local and traditional knowledge.
- Sustainable land management should tackle the issue of land degradation and reduction of soil fertility. Several proposals referred to the need to take the potential of land and soil into account in the climate change discussion. The most degraded soils must be revived, while combining with the improved efficiency of water use.  
But, for African agriculture to blossom, growth in productivity is not enough.  
As many of you said, this requires complex systems of natural resource management, efficient use of fertilizers and better water management.
- The second track is *creating an enabling environment*. We have to focus on entrepreneurship. But, the farmer can not do it alone.  
As many of you rightly stated, governments can and should set conditions and frameworks for attracting private investments. Land tenure rights, rural infrastructure,

health and education are mentioned in many proposals.

- Many proposals rightly state that special attention should be given to small-scale farmers, who must benefit from agricultural development, providing access to input markets, as well as providing processing, storage and transport capacity.  
But, I think it is also necessary to invest in large-scale and intensive farming. A balanced approach is needed.
- An African green revolution must focus on the needs of women farmers. Women's participation in decision-making processes in the areas of agriculture and rural development has been neglected for too long.  
Women are key for programs on agricultural productivity to succeed. So, women need access to financial mechanisms and micro-credits.
- *Developing sustainable production chains* is the third track. Developing a safe and sustainable food chain, from production, processing and marketing to the consumers. It must protect and augment the existing crop diversity in Africa and respect local food preferences.  
Today, agricultural sustainability spans the globe, the whole value chain of food – and agriculture-related inputs and outputs, and includes some outcomes such as nutrition, health and safety.
- In this respect I saw interesting proposals on the establishment of staple crop processing zones and lowering taxes on import of agro-processing equipment.
- Fourthly, by *improving market access*, especially for African countries.  
As farmers' production increases, they will need better access to markets. Supporting the development of local and regional markets should get more priority.  
And last but not least by providing more market access for products from developing countries.
- I very much support your ideas that it also means lowering transaction costs, for example in costs of transport, storage and market information.

- Last but not least, the fifth track is on *food security and emergency food aid*.  
Empowering poor farmers is a critical factor.  
With finance, the right input and sustainable farming practices that revitalize the soil and make wise use of water and land, farmers will increase production.  
But they need to be protected from risk in the case of unreliable rainfall. Enhanced safety nets are needed for the most vulnerable people.  
I saw many excellent proposals on smart subsidy programs and micro credits. Also new financial mechanisms are needed at the international level.
- Food security policies and food aid needs are critical.  
Moreover, sustainable agricultural development will take place in the context of the climate change, which threatens African agriculture.  
Crop biodiversity is crucial in dealing with drought and more volatile weather.

Ladies and Gentlemen

- These tracks can only be successfully implemented within the framework of supportive policies, at all levels, and effective institutions.  
Governments can and should take a leading role in that regard. Participatory approaches can closely involve farmers.  
We should look for developing and up-scaling innovative public and private partnerships in technology, development, extension, finance and in expanding market access.
- Upon closure of this High Level Meeting, I would like to re-assure you that the upcoming CSD provides a unique platform to tackle the challenges at hand.  
You clearly showed that its role is more important than ever.  
I listened closely to you, Ministers, Heads of Agencies, Farmer leaders, partners from civil society, over the last two days and take away your ideas and priorities for action.  
Your message will be taken by Minister Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah to New York to CSD17.

- The African Revolution of Africa has to become a reality. To speak with the words of a famous son of Africa: yes you can, yes you should and yes you will make it happen!
- 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 our grand children.

Thank you.