

OPENING STATEMENT AT CSD-17

4 May 2009, Monday

NGO Major Group

CSD-17 is happening at a critical juncture in history where several crises are converging - finance and food, climate and environment, governance, and now, a looming threat of a global health pandemic.

Agriculture lies at the core of all these crises, and Agriculture is also a key solution to these crises. The world therefore expects no less than A DECISIVE AND URGENT RESPONSE from CSD-17. The Negotiated Outcome from this session must lead to a RADICAL SHIFT in thinking and paradigm in agricultural development. Business-as-usual is definitely NOT AN OPTION. Sustainable development after all is NOT about business-as-usual.

We urge the CSD to adopt the recommendations of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) as basis for international and national policy-making, and planning and investments in agriculture, to attain food security, provide sustainable rural livelihoods, and build the resilience of ecosystems to climate change.

Concretely, CSD17 should focus in:

Addressing the unsustainability of current agricultural production models that depend on chemical-based inputs and crop and varietal uniformity, supported by neo-liberal trade regime;
Mainstreaming agro-ecology and sustainable agricultural practices that are socially-equitable, culturally-appropriate and environmentally-sustainable;
Shifting resources and investments to support smallholder farmers;
Giving equal importance to indigenous and local agricultural knowledge systems; and
Ensuring bottom-up, participatory and multi-sectoral approaches in policy and decision-making

Bold actions need to be supported by concrete mechanisms to significantly increase the level of funding, technical support, and assistance for sustainable agriculture [including through extension services, research and capacity building. The means of implementation must be measurable in order to hold governments accountable.

The Right to Food, Right to Water, Right to Land and Food Sovereignty must provide coherence to the Negotiated Outcome of CSD-17. These fundamental rights and principles must not be undermined by the introduction of technological solutions such as biofuels and GMOs, the neo-liberal trade agenda, and by grand agricultural development schemes such as the green revolution in Africa. After centuries of supporting the world, it is now time for the world to support Africa, not grab her land and ravage her agriculture.

We dare governments to be bold and radical, to make CSD relevant at this most challenging of times.

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