

Statement of CSD16 Major Groups: NGO
May 6, 2008

Rural Development

1. We thank the Chairperson for the opportunity to present our collective views as NGOs.
2. NGOs working for rural development are concerned with economic and technological growth in the rural areas, and more importantly, with the holistic human development of the rural peoples, especially the marginalized sectors. Development means unleashing their full potentials to actually direct their own lives and to use properly their resources through education and people-oriented processes, leading towards active and meaningful participation in various governance structures at different levels.

However, over the decades, we have seen the many constraints and obstacles in pursuing lasting development in the rural areas.

3. Rural development policies in general are not cognizant of the importance of social, political and cultural dimensions and values that are the essence of rural lives and livelihoods, necessary in the pursuit of alternatives for ending rural poverty. Contribution of rural women, farmers and workers, who carry the brunt of agricultural work, are dismally unrecognized. These policies, more often than not, are supply driven and not anchored on economic growth brought about by greater security of jobs and more secured access and control to the means of rural productivity such as land and financing.

Economic growth should lead to more equitable distribution of gains from such growth and anchored on food security, not only for the benefit of the elite, agribusiness and transnational corporations.

4. For agriculture, this would mean stronger support services delivery to farmers, greater investment in Research & Development, and ensuring farmers' control and access to farming technology including seeds, and stronger farmer/producer linkages with domestic and international markets, and continuing capacity building towards entrepreneurship.

5. Rural livelihoods are largely based on the environment and its vast natural resource, thus the degradation of fragile lands, and the continuing over-exploitation of our natural wealth puts the marginalized rural poor at risk. The various adaptation measures developed by local organizations and communities through constant interaction with the environment, need recognition and policy support from governments. The push for agrofuels to reduce greenhouse emissions and provide rural livelihoods should put into consideration implications to food security and the environment.

6. Privatization of agricultural extension and the lack of effective agricultural extension services deprive more those in the remote areas of needed services. Rural infrastructure to include transport, water supply for domestic and production purposes remain inadequate and often sidelined by other high-impact priority projects.

7. Finally, a biggest threat to rural development is the impact of trade policies. Trade does not lead to development when it results to displacement of rural peoples, environmental degradation due to mono cropping and chemical use, further indebtedness of farmers, and loss of livelihoods due to unfair competition.

Governments and policy makers have to institutionalize the meaningful participation of organized rural sectors in policy and decision-making. It is only when the people for whom the development is intended for are fully engaged, as stakeholders, can development be sustainable.

We thank you for your attention.