

Wednesday 7th May 2008
Parallel Session Conference Room 4

Session of Thematic Discussions on Agriculture and Rural Development
(Submission by Scientific and Technological Community John Stewart ICSU)

Dear Chair and Distinguished Delegates,

The Scientific and Technological Community welcomes this opportunity to address this thematic discussion on Agriculture and Rural development especially following the excellent panel discussions of both yesterday afternoon and this morning.

- 1 While acknowledging the fact that agriculture knowledge science and technology has contributed to substantial increases in agriculture production in the last 50 year, we stress that it has the capacity to deal with future challenges such as climatic change and is capable of continuing to contribute to food security (Panelist Chris Leaver outlined very clearly the scientific potential of plant production).
- 2 We also are aware that people have benefited unevenly from these yield increases across regions in part because of different organizational capacities, socio-cultural factors and institutional and policy environments.
- 3 Emphasis on yield increases and productivity can in some cases have negative effects on the long-term sustainability of production. It was interesting to note in panelist Dr. Pender's presentation examples of areas where this negative effect was later ameliorated through careful application of existing science and technology.
- 4 We state that there is an urgency to apply this science and technology to persistent socio-economic inequalities. Examples of areas where there is an urgency of action would include
 - i. reducing the risk of conflicts from competitive claims over land and water resources,
 - ii. assisting communities and individuals deal with endemic human and animal diseases
 - iii. flow of migrant laborers
 - iv. providing access to information, education and technology to poorer people (and especially women) through open, transparent engagement of all stakeholders
- 5 Many of the challenges facing agriculture currently and in the future will require innovation and integrated applications of existing knowledge and science from all sources whether formal, traditional or community based technology.
- 6 We suggest that existing opportunities will be realized by targeting small scale agricultural systems by forging public and private partnerships and increasing public and extension investment.
- 7 There is a range of such approaches in current use. Different problems will require careful selection of approaches to be used but these deliberations must be inclusive , transparent and community based.

