

63rd SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Statement by
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Commission on Sustainable Development

Report on Inter-sessional Events

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Thank you, Madame Chairman.

Dear delegates,

I am pleased to report on an inter-sessional event organized by Israel, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in contribution to the 17th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Last year, Israel also hosted inter-sessional activities and we welcome the opportunity — once again — to contribute to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).

This year, from 22 March through 30 March, the Government of Israel, in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, organized a seminar as an inter-sessional event for the CSD-17 on *The Role of Native and Desert-Adapted Species for the Purpose of Slowing Desertification*. The training took place at the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies located on Kibbutz Ketura in the desert of southern Israel.

The training workshop — held in conjunction with Israel's international development agency, MASHAV — was attended by participants of several developing countries with diverse backgrounds and dealt with issues such as agroforestry, conservation, desertification mitigation, land reclamation, native and specialized plants, sustainable agriculture, and drylands management.

The training workshop enabled the participants to gain an enhanced understanding of the sciences related to drought and desertification, as well as how to develop better policies and capabilities for addressing the economic, social and environmental challenges of drought and desertification.

In particular, the workshop aimed to share experiences and best practices about developing practical methods of reversing trends of soil degradation, including hydrological strategies and information on native and desert-adapted plant species. With the twin goals of promoting methods for improving both food security and economic opportunity, the workshop sought to improve participants' knowledge base with the ultimate hope of improving the capacity of each participant's home country to develop and apply necessary strategies and policies to mitigate desertification.

The main thrust of the training workshop was to share best practices and lessons learned in Israel. In Israel, forests that had been nearly eliminated as a result of centuries of neglect and occasional use for firewood have been restored, and in some cases entirely new forests have been planted. Tens of thousands of hectares have been reclaimed to make up today's productive lands.

The workshop used a number of case studies to demonstrate the effectiveness of various tools and science-based solutions to combat desertification. The workshops addressed issues including: Comprehensive Planning Initiatives for Drylands; Upgraded Sustainable Water Management in the Drylands; Continued Afforestation in the Arid and Semi-Arid Regions; and Policies to Promote Sustainable Agriculture in Vulnerable Regions.

The workshops also included visits to project sites where the participants saw the practical implementation of restoring an ecosystem that was severely degraded by over-grazing and erosion.

Madame Chair,

By all accounts of participant feedback, the program was a success and imparted valuable knowledge on all whom participated. In addition, to ensure that this workshop continues to have positive impact towards the implementation of the agenda of the CSD16 and CSD17, the Arava Institute and MASHAV are now working with certain countries to provide *in situ* capacity-building programs.

Madame Chair,

This activity is also seen as part of the contribution of Israel to the implantation of UN General Assembly Resolution A/62/190 — a resolution initiated and sponsored by Israel on agricultural technology for development. The resolution called upon Member States to work with developing countries in the field of sustainable agriculture and share important knowledge and technology in that regard.

As a leader in the fields of sustainable agriculture and the mitigation of desertification, Israel will continue to actively fulfill its responsibility to share the knowledge and skills we have gained with others, especially in developing countries.

Thank you, Madame Chair.