



IRELAND

Statement by

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Minister for the Environment, Community
and Local Government**

High Level Segment Opening Statement

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Thank you Mr Chairman. I want to associate myself at the outset with the statement made by Minister Fazekas on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

As a recently appointed Environment Minister, I recognise my responsibility to contribute to consider the themes for this CSD in an integrated way, and to chart a new path towards a more sustainable lifestyle. This is critical if we are to protect our planet for future generations – the generations that are represented so powerfully by the Children and Youth - Major Group - from whom we have heard over the past few days.

The focus on the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Production and Consumption offers the opportunity to create a common vision and an action-based approach on the sustainable use of natural resources.

The “Resource-efficient Europe” flagship initiative under the EU 2020 Strategy sums up quite neatly what we need to achieve. We need to, and I quote,

- “decouple economic growth from the use of resources,
- support the shift towards a low carbon economy,
- increase the use of renewable energy sources,
- modernise our transport sector, and
- promote energy efficiency”. End quote.

In Ireland, we are active on all of these agendas. We are working towards a significant increase in renewable energy and the achievement of 20% energy efficiency savings by 2020. Both of these will have a vital de-carbonising impact, reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. So too will our “Smarter Travel” sustainable transport policy, where the key strands include reducing travel demand by better aligning our spatial and transport planning policies, and improving the efficiency of motor transport.

Waste management also offers many sustainability opportunities. A more progressive approach which sees waste as a resource with economic value can create jobs, drive innovation and reduce pollution.

In relation to mining, Ireland has an integrated and robust regulatory framework which encourages responsible exploration. This model provides for extensive public participation in the environmental impact assessment and wider decision-making processes, appropriate environmental controls, orderly mine closure and, finally, rehabilitation.

At an overall level, the global economic crises provide us with a stark wake-up call. A call that emphasises how the old “business as usual” approaches that created the crises simply will not do if we want to achieve sustainable growth while protecting the environment. We simply cannot remain on our present unsustainable path.

I therefore welcome the increasing focus on the green economy as we prepare for Rio+20 next year. Greening our economies is central to achieving long-term sustainable development, with enduring economic growth that provides decent jobs and reduces poverty.

Sustainable development is central to the fight against poverty and hunger. Ireland is strongly committed to meeting the UN target of spending 0.7% of GNP on ODA by 2015. Ireland is also working closely with other donor countries and developing country partners to reach the MDGs agreed by the international community at the United Nations in 2000.

Mr. Chairman, in closing, let me re-iterate that Ireland is committed to playing its part in the achievement of the CSD's objectives. An ambitious outcome from this CSD cycle will be an essential milestone along that path and we wish you every success in stewarding the process towards a successful conclusion.

Thank you.