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Check Against Delivery

Statement of

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U.S. Department of State**

***Ministerial Roundtable on Inter-linkages among the Thematic Issues, including
Adaptation to Climate Change***

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In this critical cycle of the Commission on Sustainable Development, there are at least three institutional and policy elements essential to success: (1) first, the foundational role of science and education; (2) second, the empowerment of local communities to make decisions that make sense in the context of cultural, political and environmental realities; and (3) third, the efficient delivery of information and tools to people in ways that allow them to adapt science and market knowledge to where they live.

Mr. Chairman, the questions before us this afternoon are asking how we can make progress in several areas. In addressing questions 2-5 as posed for this afternoon's session, I would like to cite one example here in the United States. One important way to encourage adoption of sustainable agricultural practices is to provide tailored technical assistance that is free, up-to-date, and easy to understand.

The National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service (NSAIS) is a unique technical assistance service provided through a public/private partnership between our U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Business-Cooperative Service and the National Center for Appropriate Technology, a national nonprofit organization. This program

offers a “one-stop shop” for farmers and ranchers – the only national program to provide one-on-one technical assistance on sustainable agriculture and marketing to all 50 states.

Free technical assistance is offered via a toll-free telephone number that is answered in English and Spanish for 12 hours each day. Assistance is also available through a website that offers more than 250 publications on topics directly related to sustainable agriculture and marketing. The technical staff includes highly qualified individuals representing diverse agricultural disciplines including horticulture, agronomy, animal science, agriculture economics and marketing. Most staff members also have experience in farming, ranching, extension and education.

In 2007, the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service provided more than 26,000 responses to technical assistance requests. Its website received more than 2.9 million unique visitors and more than 2.5 million publications were downloaded or printed from the site. In 2004, a third-party evaluation of the services showed excellent, very high satisfaction ratings with the 800 line services, website, and information provided. A majority of respondents reported changing some part of their operation based on information received from the program.

Having a “one-stop” approach simplifies access to the latest information on production practices, alternative crop and livestock enterprises, innovative marketing, organic certification, and highlights of local, regional and national sustainable agriculture activities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.