

Please check against delivery



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Sixteenth Session, New York, 05 – 16 May 2008

LAND – part 1

Statement by
Ms. Jasmina KARBA
EU Presidency

on behalf of the European Union
New York, 7 May 2008

Mr. Chair!

It is an honour for Slovenia to present statement on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Country the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Montenegro, and Serbia as well as the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.*

- The EU wishes to emphasise the key role of **land use and management** in ensuring sustainable development. Land policy represents one of the most critical and complex issues given its impact on peace and stability, economic growth, equitable access to land resources and social development, gender equality, poverty eradication and natural resources management.
- Fostering the sustainable use of natural resources and soil preservation are the main challenges identified by the Johannesburg plan of implementation (JPOI). To address these challenges, the EU sees a key role for **integrated planning and management of land** and other resources, inter alia, through the improvement of administrative systems. Thereby we take into account various aspects associated with land, such as agricultural, rural development, soil protection, forestry, biodiversity conservation and tourism as well as institutional and educational level of societies.
- Arable land and fragile rangelands especially in certain parts of the world are deteriorating at an alarming pace, which might jeopardise the **food security**. The world's growing demand for food requires increased production on land. It is therefore critical to reverse this trend of land deterioration. Given the relationship between land and food security the EU would like to highlight the importance of the 2004 FAO Voluntary guidelines. These support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security, combat hunger and poverty, and promote the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.
- **Degradation of land** and soil through desertification, soil erosion and nutrition depletion, salinisation of water resources, contamination of areas by heavy metals or other undesired substances, together with accelerated development of human settlements requiring more and more land, is the most critical and increasing threat to sustainable land use. It has negative impacts on agricultural productivity and rural development and therefore directly affects the livelihoods of millions of people. It is crucial to reverse this trend, particularly in the light of the need to preserve production resources, such as soil and water. It is important to rethink the use of soil in agriculture since the availability of land for food production is again becoming strategically important, not only in developing but also in developed countries.

* *The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

- Land and water use practices affect the state of land and water resources. Better soil and water management can increase land productivity, resilience of farming systems and availability of water resources. Enhancing – in a sustainable manner - the productivity of land and the efficient use of water resources in agriculture, **applying good agricultural practices**, such as organic farming, zero tillage and ensuring diversification of economic activities is of paramount importance.
- Certain uses of land can drive **climate change**, but soil can also mitigate it through carbon sequestration. Also, in our search for renewable energy and the focus on bio-energy sustainable use of land can be a defining factor in competing claims on land. Soil has to be perceived as a part of the solution to climate change. Climate change can be tackled by taking appropriate measures and avoiding unsustainable practices.
- Soil protection is a great challenge of the current EU land policy. Different EU policies (for instance on water, waste, chemicals, industrial pollution prevention, nature protection, pesticides, agriculture and rural development) contribute to soil protection. Since these policies are not sufficient to ensure an adequate level of protection for soil in all EU countries, the **EU soil protection strategy** has been prepared to support a coordinated approach for soil protection.
- **The EU “Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection”** addresses soil protection challenges and defines a coordinated and comprehensive approach. The strategy will not benefit only soil. Other environmental media such as water, air and nature will be improved as well. It aims to ensure that land users will benefit from a soil which can better perform the economic functions they expect and the environment, in general, will benefit from the ecological services that a healthy soil provides.

Thank you.