

**Intervention by Mr. B. Pradhan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Rural
Development of India during the thematic discussions at CSD-16**

on

“RURAL DEVELOPMENT”

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6th May 2008

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Mr. Chairman

India associates itself with the statement of the Group of 77. We welcome the report of the Secretary General comprehensively identifying the continuing challenges to sustainable rural development, especially rural poverty. Since the 1992 Rio Summit, India has embarked on numerous initiatives aimed at translating the principles of sustainable development into tangible outcomes, by according highest priority to areas of afforestation, soil and water conservation, land rehabilitation, rural employment generation, health and sanitation, drinking water supply and primary education. The increasing empowerment of decentralized institutions of local governance, namely, the Panchayati Raj Institutions, in the matters of management and development of local environmental and natural resources like land and water further brings resource and users closer to each other, thus significantly improving the long-term environmental sustainability of these resources

Mr. Chairman,

India has undertaken a major time bound infrastructure development initiative for faster and inclusive growth in rural India, titled '*Bharat Nirmal*' comprising rural housing, rural water supply, rural electrification, rural roads, rural telephony and irrigation as essential components for rural infrastructure.

Mr. Chairman,

A secure and sustained agricultural growth is the sine-qua-non for achieving sustainable rural development. India's 11th Five Year Plan for the period 2007-2012 projects an overall annual growth of 9%, based on a 4% annual growth in the agricultural sector. To achieve this, Rural Development Initiatives are being re-engineered to give more focus on welfare of disadvantaged sections; more employment avenues; enhanced allocations for education, health, sanitation and other infrastructural facilities, increased investment in agriculture, integrated watershed management and afforestation; as well as targeted public distribution system to protect the poor for ensuring food and nutrition security. The public private partnership mode of resource mobilization, through Rural Business Hubs, will further support these initiatives. Gender remains the cross cutting themes of all rural development initiatives including institutions of rural governance. At least 1/3rd women's representation in Panchayati Raj Institutions ensures that women remain equal partners in decision-making and programme implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

India has made significant improvements in institutional and administrative frameworks to protect the natural resource base, while improving the well-being of the population dependent upon these resources in rural areas. We have enacted the Right to Information Act, which has promoted accountability and transparency in the entire gamut of governance.

Mr. Chairman,

Developing countries have made concerted efforts to promote rural development as an integral part of sustainable development. However, commitments by developed countries, particularly in the areas of ODA, access to critical technologies at concessional and preferential terms, as well as capacity building, remains unfulfilled. It is time for the international community to change course and move away from a 'business as usual' approach. CSD-16 offers a unique and timely opportunity to provide concrete and action-oriented solutions to the inextricably inter-woven cluster of issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for your kind attention.

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