

Mr Chair, Honourable Ministers and colleagues

As the CSD-16 review session is fast heading towards closure, we have learnt from each other how huge, complex and compounding the challenges are that we, humanity, face, towards sustainable development and realising the MDG goals. In a sense people can say it leaves them feeling overwhelmed, disempowered, and even alienated.

But of course, we know that we, especially this group who have gathered here at CSD-16 cannot go home and carry on with business as usual. We need to provide clear and decisive leadership. We also need our international community and national partners to provide us with effective, interactive and enabling platforms that are focused on seeking and implementing practical solutions and fostering true partnerships.

We need to recognise that implementation best happens at the local level, where people live and work and where their efforts are supported by local government and private organizations.

Allow me one example: Given sufficient support and with targeted investment, community food systems projects based in urban areas, such as retail and wholesale farmers markets and farm-to-school programs, have enormous potential to revitalize regional agriculture by encouraging market-based decisions by small-scale local farmers to develop higher-value products and sustainable practices. This also increases the production and availability of affordable food for all.

Such a community-based, farm and city partnership strategy – which enables farmers to market directly to consumers and other buyers – **is the basis for the remarkable revitalization of small-scale sustainable agriculture right here in New York City – where 200 New York State and other local farmers sell at 90 community farmers markets and where 1 million public school children are now eating locally grown fresh foods.**

In addition to the traditional support services of improving small farmers' access to affordable land, capital, credit, and technology, Local Authorities, acting in partnership with community based organizations, are strategically harnessing the buying power of urban populations for their regional farmers by supporting investment in appropriate marketing infrastructure and targeted local food procurement.

Such a strategy involves developing food systems thinking and policies by Local Authorities that have not traditionally viewed food and agriculture to be their concern or domain – as well as new formal and informal collaborations among city, regional, and national bodies and private sector food system stakeholders including farmers, processors, distributors, and consumers.

Urban farming is but one example of innovation in cities and urban areas that can meaningfully address the MDGs and set us on a path of sustainable development. What we welcome is the full **and meaningful recognition** of

the role and unique position of cities to address these development issues, whether it relates to water and sanitation, energy security, food supply or local economic development. We welcome and invite your continued support - not only in delegating down functions to the appropriate local level, but also invite the international community to support local governments with much needed resources, technical expertise and capacity building.

I thank you.