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Statement by

H.E. Mr. Ton Boon von Ochsée

Ambassador for Sustainable Development

of

the Kingdom of the Netherlands

on the occasion of the debate about the thematic cluster for the
implementation cycle 2008/2009 regarding
"Land"

The 16th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

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Mr./Ms. Chairperson,

Land use related challenges are becoming more and more important and visible. Let me give the example of The Netherlands which has a very high population density and land serves multiple functions. It is used for agriculture, nature, recreation and living. The pressure on land is high and we need to use our land in an efficient and sustainable way. We follow a process of careful planning which leads to the enactment of legislation to ensure sustainable land use. In the planning process we engage owners, users and inhabitants of rural areas, interest groups and NGOs through multi-stakeholder dialogues. We aim for land planning that is multi-sectoral and include innovative solutions for rural areas, taking into account natural water systems and infrastructure, cultural historical aspects and living and working conditions..

Today, the growing demand for biomass-based energy can also lead to increased pressure on land. We need to ensure that the production of biomass for energy production is sustainable in order to mitigate the associated risks. First, we need to develop sustainability principles that target the effects at plantation level. Second, there is a need to monitor and gain more information on the effects of biomass production for energy purposes at the macro level as well as the effects on land use and food production. Investments in so-called 'second generation' bio fuels need to be stepped up as these bio fuels generally have a higher CO2 saving potential and cause less competition for land. The Netherlands is actively involved in these two areas.

If we speak about land it is not enough to focus on the products deriving from land. We also need to look at who owns the land and who is involved in managing and using the land. In this respect, I would like to highlight the important role of women in agriculture, food production, natural resource management and rural development. The role of women is evident as they are for example main producers of staple crops, including rice, maize and wheat. At the same time, women own less than 5 % of the world's land. Women's independent equal right to and control over land can enhance food security and economic opportunities. In this context, I would like to stress the importance of implementing at the national level the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Beijing Platform of Action. In doing so, States should not only enact and enforce a legal framework prohibiting all discrimination against women but should also take all necessary measures to lift obstacles that prevent women's effective enjoyment of their land rights and their rights to other natural resources.

Thank you Mr./Ms. Chairperson