

Statement on behalf of the Scientific and Technological Special Group

Addressing Rural Development to

The Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development

Submitted Feb 24,2009

Distinguished Chair,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the Scientific and Technological Major Group and specifically the World Federation of Engineering Organizations, a federation of 90 countries representing some 15 million engineers.

Data gaps in basic and fundamental knowledge exist in many rural and developing areas. Research and data gathering is required so that policy decisions are built upon scientific knowledge and supplemented by local and indigenous knowledge.

Our intervention this afternoon outlines the integrated nature of rural development and the fundamental building blocks required to allow a sustainable rural economy to grow. Physical infrastructures, social infrastructures, and economic infrastructures are all prerequisites for a sustainable rural society. The correlation between the state of these infrastructures and a society's quality of life is understood.

The infrastructures that are underdeveloped present barriers to effective rural development; those infrastructures that are currently meeting the demands placed upon them are aging and require investment to make them sustainable, and lastly all infrastructures have inherent vulnerabilities created by the threats of a changing climate. Building, rehabilitating, and adapting these infrastructure is required.

Identifying and defining these inherent barriers and vulnerabilities within rural infrastructures, and the implementation of feasible solutions offers many benefits. The potential for an agricultural based rural economy to grow will be unleashed when these barriers are removed. We have heard how farmers and local entrepreneurs are able to create wealth and employment when they are empowered by removing barriers. At the local level capacity building in infrastructure management and operations will ensure sustainability of the infrastructure and in this regard focusing training and education towards women should be encouraged.

The leadership for proactive action can come from the CSD process by agreeing upon a policy that provides the tools and knowledge to rural society to identify and remove these infrastructure barriers.

Thank you!