

STATEMENT BY

PROF. JAMES L. OLE KIYIAPI,
LEADER OF THE
KENYA DELEGATION DURING
THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT
OF
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Mr. Chairman

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Kenya delegation to congratulate H.E Mr. Francis Nema Minister for Environment of the Republic of Zimbabwe on your election as the chair of CSD-16 and to commend you on the able manner in which you and your Bureau are guiding the deliberations of this session.

I wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the informative reports on the thematic issues under consideration. We trust that the reports have provided the necessary inputs to the participants for informed engagement.

The Kenya delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Djibouti and Antigua and Barbuda, on behalf of the African Group and the Group of 77 and China respectively.

Mr. Chairman,

The latest UN reports have indicated that Africa is the only continent that is not on track with the implementation and achievement of Millennium Development Goals by 2015. This notwithstanding the fact that Africa is not lacking in resources that can spur its own development. The challenges facing the continent are huge but also well understood. What is now needed are resolute actions, political push and greater commitment on the part of the African governments with the support of the international community to build on progress made and firmly engender objectives of sustainable development. This calls for targeted priority interventions, focused programmatic approaches in terms of resource mobilization leveraged through appropriate technology, effective institutional arrangements and strengthening and mobilization of locally available but often dispersed capacity in form of human capital

The thematic cluster issues under discussion during CSD-16 are critical to Africa's development. Land, agriculture and rural development are indeed among the most crucial prime movers of Africa's development, so closely intertwined that they must only be addressed holistically.

On the land Question

As is the case with most of sub-Saharan Africa, land in Kenya is a basic natural resource which is intricately linked to the production sector of the economy and rural livelihoods. The full potential of land is not often realized because of competing land use alternatives, conflicting sectoral land-related policies, and tenural systems and sometimes overlapping legal mandates. This in effect leads to mosaic of land use types and patterns which at the landscape level perpetuate largely subsistence driven and low value production systems and in extreme cases leads to gross competition for natural resources and often trigger the so-called land conflicts. At the most basic level such conflicts are a manifestation of resource competition driven and compounded by narrow production options and constrained potentials. How can this happen in a continent where paradoxically considerable land resources remain under utilized? Though national circumstances might be different, the following general observations apply to most countries including Kenya - an urgent need for:

- Rationalization of sectoral policies hinging on land as a resource and streamlining of tenural regimes to create real empowerment tied to responsible stewardship to land.
- Targeted interventions at developing critical land resources that have potential for real impacts and multi-plier positive effects on the rural economy.
- Broad national and local level land use planning to optimize land potentials and diversify production.

- Coordinated land use initiatives in a programmatic approach to promote sustainable land use principles – soil erosion control, catchment protection, water conservation, encourage mixed production systems – within a well defined institutional framework.

Regarding Agriculture

Most of the African economies rely on agriculture for subsistence and income generation. In Kenya, agriculture contributes about 24 percent to the Gross Domestic Product, it contributes about 60 percent of the employment and approximately the same percentage of export earnings. The sector faces numerous challenges including: diminishing agricultural land, low investment portfolio, limited credit facilities, weakly developed marketing systems and low value addition. As 80% of agricultural production is rain-fed agriculture, the impacts of Climate Change pose a serious challenge and a real threat to food security. Urgent adaptation measures are needed to shield the country against adverse effects of Climate Change through massive investments in forestry and water sectors.

Recognizing the central role of Agriculture in achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development, the Government of Kenya in 2004 formulated a policy framework entitled “Strategy for the Revitalization of Agriculture (SRA)” whose main thrust is to generate wealth, create employment, achieve food security and reduce poverty. The implementation of the SRA has resulted in the improvement of the agricultural sector’s performance from negative 3% in 2002 to positive 5.4% in 2006. In spite of the above, the Kenyan agricultural sector requires additional and predictable funding support and access to international markets, development and transfer of affordable and appropriate agricultural technologies and deliberate transformation from a largely subsistence to “high value agricultural production.”

Mr. Chairman,

The Rural Development Nexus

It must now be apparent that economic growth alone is not sufficient to ensure sustainability. We must address the twin objectives of livelihood improvement and/or eradication of poverty rampant among majority of the rural populations, as well as environmental protection. This is summed up in the nexus of rural development. Kenya is responding to challenges of rural development through three strategic approaches:

1. Deliberate policies to re-engineer and increase access to basic education by majority of the rural poor through “Free-Primary Education Programs.”
2. Provision of basic infrastructure through channeling budgetary resources to local level projects, rural electrification as well as water development infrastructure.
3. Devolution of decision making and development prioritization at Constituency level as a way of strengthening governance structures.

Local level interventions are a must in the face of pervasive rural poverty and environmental degradation. It is not feasible anymore to expect 20% of the so-called high potential agricultural land area to support growing population now at close to 35 million people Kenya must find development opportunities in the extensive (80%) dry land regions of the country. Research and development investments should be targeted at regions to turn them into more productive zones than is presently the case. Innovations and development initiatives must be found to assist local communities to adapt to the effects of drought and desertification through diversification of livelihood support systems. Overall, the powerful lessons emerging from decades of huge investment in rural development, whether through donor funding or national budgetary allocation is the realization that unless we re-think the strategies to escape from ‘trap of subsistence-maintenance and rural poverty’, real development gains would be hard to measure. Hence, the recent steps taken by the Government of Kenya to elaborate a programmatic and prioritized 5 year-cycle interventions engendered in Vision 2030 whose implementation commenced this year.

Mr. Chairman,

The high incidence of Africa's indebtedness has grossly crippled the continent's ability to develop. The Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative should be reviewed to be equitable to all countries irrespective of their economic status. Debt is a key constraint in sustainable development in Africa. In the case of Kenya, the debt burden is currently about US \$ 13 billion or about 43.5 percent of GDP and more than government spending. Considering that Kenya is not classified as a Highly Indebted Poor Country, means that a lot of funds are used to service this debt and therefore, compromising the national efforts to lift a high percentage of the population from the poverty trap.

In the end, the ability of most African Governments to respond more adequately to global challenges such as Climate Change is intricately linked to the extent to which they are able to achieve real transformation in rural development through improved livelihoods of majority of the people. International funding support must pointedly target here. It also calls for fundamental shifts in terms of realignment of national budgetary resources – to put priority investments in those sectors that have the most positive impacts and multiplier effects to rural economy.

Mr. Chairman,

Trade

Regarding trade, many African countries focus on market access to the lucrative industrialized markets ignoring the fact that the efforts to increase export to these markets need to be supported with attempts to boost trade among the African nations themselves. The African Union (AU) Ministerial meetings in Libreville, in November 2006 and the Abuja Summit in December 2006 have rekindled a new interest in the potential of intra-Africa trade as one of the vehicles for alleviating the continent's dire poverty and stimulating economic growth. This would require identifying synergies and complementarities between and within the various regional trading blocks with a view to eliminating trade tariffs and barriers that currently pose serious threats towards the South South and North South trading regimes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, Africa can realize more benefits and move on the path of developments if it:

- Focuses efforts on sustainable land management and create more national and local level consciousness in environmental protection and management.
- Deliberately capitalizes on the natural resource base to transform rural livelihoods and convert the potent human capital into economic assets.
- Selects and implements a stream of priority measures to buffer the continent against the unpredictable but likely effects of Climate Change through a coordinated approach.
- Uses international and regional mechanisms to shape a regional agenda for rural development, international environment governance, capital investments and build effective national and local institutions for resource mobilization and forge practical collaborative ventures.

Thank you.