



Commission on Sustainable Development

Sixteenth session, High-Level Segment

**Statement by Julia Marton-Lefèvre
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Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies & Gentlemen,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to share IUCN's views on the critical issues that have been on our agenda at this Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification, and water and sanitation are all issues the world is expecting us to address.

These issues confront humanity with grave challenges. There is a global food crisis, telling us not least that we need to act urgently on drought, which leaves people vulnerable to hunger and conflict; on desertification, which is enfeebling productivity in agriculture; and on land degradation, which is robbing future generations of the very soil needed to feed themselves.

How we respond presents critical choices. We must address not just food security, but also a burgeoning water crisis, a crisis of biodiversity loss, and the threats posed by climate change. We must do all this while sustaining a growing economy and defeating poverty.

The work of CSD, and the deliberations at WSSD on which it is based, show us a way forward. We need sustainable development. Most urgently, as our sense of crisis grows, we need action on the ground that turns science and policy into benefits for people and for the ecosystems that sustain us all.

During this 16th Session of the CSD, we have heard repeatedly about the need for sustainable agricultural development, climate change adaptation and integrated water resources management. None of

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these offers a simple solution. Each demands not one global actor, but many actors working at all levels. Each demands action in not one sector, but integration across sectors and across the environmental, social and economic pillars of sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman, sustainable development is impossible without the basic infrastructure of ecosystem services. Mainstreaming ecosystem services in water management, climate change adaptation and agricultural development is fundamental to meeting our sustainable development goals. These ecosystem services underpin all of the issues on our agenda. They are tied intimately to human well-being and are essential for production and consumption; they help to alleviate and reduce poverty, and are required for societies to prosper and economies to grow.

Ecosystem services can be sustained through practical solutions. There are many that are ready, but they need to be deployed, intensified and scaled up rapidly. Sustainable fisheries depend on management of productive coastal ecosystems. Small-holder farmers need to benefit from innovation in soil conservation. River basin management that reduces land and soil degradation and restores river corridors is needed to sustain the economies of river basins worldwide. Integrated, multi-functional landscapes that can build sustainable livelihoods are needed so that they can spur sustainable agricultural development. A mix of solutions is vital, but these have to be chosen with care. With biofuels for example, they cannot be a solution if they mean lower food security or if they increase the severity of the water crisis.

Cases presented by IUCN at this meeting have shown valuable lessons in how to practice sustainable development. Our experience shows us that progress comes from reform of governance to bring stakeholders closer to decision making; from building capacities that empower people to act; from innovative financing that links conservation incentives to markets; from building social equity that addresses the needs of the most poor and of women and children.

Dialogue is key, to make links between science, policy and practice stronger – and to ensure that the most relevant knowledge is applied where it is needed most.

IUCN has a mandate to bring scientists and policy makers together, and to engage our members and partners in demonstrating the practice of sustainable development. We stand ready to assist in developing effective policy and law, and to help translate international policies into local action.

Humanity is confronting its challenges and people are rightly looking to sustainable development for solutions. We know that the basic infrastructure of ecosystems is fundamental to these solutions, but we also know there are no easy answers. However, the elements of the way forward are clear. Not least, we need coherent, integrated policies that mainstream ecosystem services into strategies for development and economic growth.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to say a few words about the debate currently raging about the food crisis, which is too simplistic. There are many factors affecting food prices and food security. The debate should really be about how the world produces food and how it is accessed by different groups of society. Unsustainable

agricultural policies and technologies, inequitable trade rules, agricultural subsidies that distort the markets, and the systematic marginalization of small producers lie at the heart of the current food crisis. In addition, there is chronic underinvestment in agriculture in developing countries and a real neglect of the basic premise that ecosystems have to be in good shape in order to provide good food. We need more discussion about the risks biofuels pose, but also the opportunities they present. Second generation biofuels offer substantial opportunities. They are produced from agricultural waste or algae, so reduce competition with food crops, and offer higher energy yields. IUCN is working to find long-term and sustainable solutions based on the best science available.

Mr. Chairman, IUCN urges governments, civil society and the private sector to strengthen their commitments to these approaches.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we invite all those assembled here, and others, to join IUCN and its members at the World Conservation Congress, from the 4th to 15th of October this year in Barcelona. We look forward to continuing this crucial dialogue on sustainable development there.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.