



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

## Speaking Points

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### Land

- On behalf of the European Union the Slovenian Presidency wishes to emphasise the key role of land management in ensuring sustainable rural development. Land policy represents one of the most critical and complex issues given its impact on peace/stability, economic growth, equitable social development, gender equality, poverty reduction and natural resources management.
- Fostering the sustainable use of natural resource and soil preservation are main challenges identified by the Johannesburg plan of implementation (JPOI). To address these challenges, the EU sees a key role for integrated planning and management of land and other resources inter alia, through the improvement of administrative systems. Thereby we take into account various functions associated with land, such as agriculture, rural development, soil protection, forestry, biodiversity conservation and tourism as well as institutional and educational level of societies.
- We also acknowledge the JPOI commitment to equitable access to land and transparent land policy as a prerequisite for economic growth and poverty reduction. Guaranteeing enforceable rights for farmers is also part of this undertaking. In a number of countries, land tenure remains a significant constraint for investment, sustainable natural resource management and economic development. Some ways of land appropriation cause additional challenge. Therefore, we call to develop and enforce policies that through a rights-based approach, as outlined in the 2004 FAO Voluntary Guidelines, promote legal security and transparency. The EU is willing to share experience gained in many EU candidate countries and new member states, where the regulation of this field has been successfully completed and serves as a good basis for further development.
- The socio-economic and environmental importance of land is also recognised in many EU policies and legislative documents. The EU promotes consensual land policy processes and supports collaboration between state, civil society, bilateral and multilateral stakeholders, with the ultimate objective of pro-poor land governance. These principles and values are embodied in the 2004 "**EU Land Guidelines**" that provide conceptual and methodological support to land policy development and land reform programmes.

- Given the relationship between land and food security the EU recalls the importance of the 2004 FAO Voluntary guidelines. These support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security, combat hunger and poverty, and accelerate attainment of the MDGs.
- The EU encourages the continued engagement of financial institutions and donors in land-related activities at the regional, country and international level. These interventions should be build on their comparative advantages and knowledge, however respect the principles of coordination, complementarity and coherence in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.
- The EU has made progress towards fulfilling its JPOI commitments by adopting Thematic Strategies on soil protection, sustainable use of natural resources, waste prevention and recycling, protection and conservation of marine environment, pesticides and forests. Moreover, Water Framework Directive and legislation on protected areas, harmonisation of spatial information and environmental impacts have been enforced. Soil protection is included also in agriculture and rural development policy and documents.
- Member states have made substantial progress in the field of land management. Nevertheless, it is necessary to step up activities in some areas. It is crucial to prevent serious soil degradation and desertification, particularly in the light of the climate change and the need to preserve production resources, such as soil and water. Accelerated development of urbanization requires more and more land. An additional problem is the pollution of some areas by heavy metals or other undesired substances. The EU "Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection" addresses these challenges and defines a common and comprehensive approach.
- Looking ahead to CSD 16 the EU favours mutual sharing of knowledge and experiences with all stake holders and particularly local authorities not only within the UNECE region, but also wider. Our common challenge is to safeguard the earth's capacity to support life in all its diversity, with all due respect of the limits of the planet's natural resources, to reduce poverty and to ensure sustainable development. The challenge is focusing on concrete measures, which will speed-up the implementation of the Johannesburg commitments while recognising experiences and particularities of countries and regions.