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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
CABINET DU SECRETAIRE GENERAL

REFERENCE:

25 March 2008

Dear Mr. Nhema,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I thank you for your letter of 3 March 2008, inviting him to deliver a keynote address at the opening of the Ministerial Segment of the 16th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, on 14 May 2008 at United Nations Headquarters.

I am pleased to inform you that the Secretary-General has accepted to address this important meeting. He looks forward to meeting you and the distinguished participants on the meeting date.

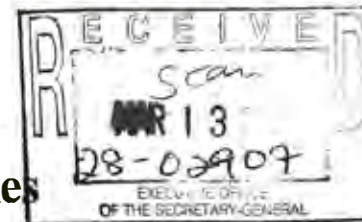
Yours sincerely,

Vijay Nambiar
Chef de Cabinet

Mr. Francis Nhema
Chairman
16th Session of the UN Commission
on Sustainable Development
New York

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3 March 2008

Excellency,

The UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) will hold its 16th session this coming May at UN Headquarters in New York. The Commission will consider the crucial issues of agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. Accelerated progress in addressing these issues, as you have repeatedly emphasized, is key to achieving the MDGs, especially in Africa.

Close to 900 million people in the world today are suffering from hunger and malnutrition. In sub-Saharan Africa, one-third of the families are struggling daily to feed their children. If the current trend continues, sub-Saharan Africa will have to wait until 2030 before the region can meet the hunger target set forth in the Millennium Declaration. Increased land degradation, drought and desertification, particularly in Africa, have added to the difficulties in enhancing agricultural productivity. Climate change is further aggravating the effects of drought and desertification, reducing water supplies and lowering crop yields.

How the international community can effectively tackle these challenges will be the focus of the Ministerial Segment of the CSD session. Over 100 Ministers are expected to participate in the discussions, along with some 2500 delegates. On behalf of the Bureau of the Commission, I have the honour to invite you to deliver the keynote address at the opening of the Ministerial Segment (10:00 am, 14 May 2008). Your address will help guide Ministers on global, as well as Africa's, priority tasks ahead and keep the momentum for renewed action in achieving the MDGs.

As reaffirmed by recent General Assembly resolutions, the CSD is a high-level commission on sustainable development within the UN system. Its outcome could provide an important input to the high-level meeting on the MDGs you and the President of the General Assembly will be organizing on 25 September 2008. We look forward to welcoming you at CSD-16 and to receiving your guidance.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Francis Nhema
Chairman of CSD-16

His Excellency
Mr. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General
United Nations