WELCOME ADDRESS BY SENATOR GARETH EVANS, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE, AT THE OPENING OF THE MID TERM MEETING OF CGIAR AT THE FEDERATION BALL ROOM, HYATT HOTEL, 9.00am, 30 MAY 1989.
It is particularly pleasing to me that one of the major themes of this meeting is sustainability. In Australia concern about environmental issues and the sustainability of development has become particularly significant in recent years as more and more people express their concern about the damage to our land, our forests and an escalating number of threats to the global environment.

These concerns cannot adequately be dealt with by one country, as both the causes and solutions require a co-ordinated international effort. Indeed, it is the developing countries - faced with the pressures of increasing population and the consequent demands for food and income - which are now suffering most from environmental degradation. These countries are losing the resource base on which their agricultural production depends. Yet land management techniques do exist which will not only mitigate against environmental damage but will also increase agricultural production.

The International Agricultural Research Centres have a crucial role to play in the development and dissemination of sustainable agricultural techniques which are so important in both enhancing agricultural production and in protecting the resource base.

Australia has much to offer in this field. We have already been through the process of developing agriculture in a difficult environment and made our share of the mistakes which lead to soil erosion and deforestation. Indeed, since European settlement, much of our agriculture was
environmentally damaging. But we are learning. Australians have become more aware of their environment and research, and its practical applications, are leading to improved land management. Through the research activity of our tertiary institutions, CSIRO and the relevant State departments, coupled with the experience of our farmers, we now have considerable expertise available which can assist developing countries in developing and implementing systems of sustainable agriculture.

Through the Australian development assistance program we have taken advantage of this reservoir of skill. Agricultural aid in the order of $85 million this year represents some 40% of that Australian bilateral project assistance which can be identified by sector. Australian aid has particularly focused on dryland (rainfed) farming and the development of sustainable land management. Some notable examples of projects of this type are the Highlands Agricultural and Social Development Project in Northern Thailand which has undertaken research and extension into sustainable farming systems in the Thai highlands; the Integrated Agricultural Development Project on the western part of the island of Timor in Indonesia which is seeking appropriate land management approaches for an area already suffering from severe environmental degradation; and a natural resources management project in the Philippines.

Australia is also a significant donor to agricultural research and development by multilateral organisations. This year we have contributed $6.1 million to the International Agricultural Research Centres. We encourage the Centres to take account of sustainability in their activities and indeed last year's grants included a specific allocation to the CGIAR Secretariat for initiatives in this area. Australia also contributes to UN agencies such as the FAO, the UNDP and UNEP, and international financial institutions, notably the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, all of which are taking important initiatives toward the development of sustainable land management in developing countries.
As well as the agricultural development projects supported by the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB), its sister organization, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), funds a range of projects many of which are investigating aspects of agricultural sustainability. Under the visionary guidance of the late Sir John Crawford, the Centre was established to develop research programs designed to tackle the agricultural problems of developing countries and has mobilised Australian research expertise to this end. The Australian Government is contributing $15 million this year to the work of ACIAR.

Our concern for sustainability is not limited to specific activities but is ingrained across our whole development assistance program. AIDAB has reviewed its activities to determine their potential environmental impact and has taken steps to ensure that all activities are environmentally responsible. Guidelines have now been adopted to address a range of questions which will need to be asked of each project to ensure that any environmental impacts are identified. I am assured that the Bureau takes its responsibilities in this area very seriously and I expect that this will be reflected in the quality of the environmental analysis of aid activities.

More broadly at the policy level I propose to make a comprehensive policy statement on aid and the environment at this year's World Development Debate which will be sponsored by AIDAB in early August.

Trees are an important component of sustainable land use systems and it is therefore most fitting that this meeting will be considering an appropriate role for forestry within the agricultural research structure. Australia shares your interest in the issues of tropical forestry. Within our own country there has been considerable debate about the utilization of our forests and the Australian Government has taken steps to ensure the protection of our most important forest areas. Australians are now coming to recognize that it is in the developing countries that the
greatest threat to the tropical forests now lies. My colleague the Minister for Resources, Senator Peter Cook, has convened a meeting of interested groups to consider what initiatives Australia can advance to help in the conservation of tropical forests. He has put work in hand to develop a code of forest practices which embody standards for sustainable management and environmental protection.

As in agriculture, Australian skills and resources in forestry can make a significant contribution to developing countries. Australia has considerable expertise in the management of natural forests and in the rehabilitation of degraded lands. This country is the home of many tree species of major importance to developing countries including eucalyptus and acacias which have been spectacularly successful for forestry and agroforestry in both the wet and dry tropics.

Although forestry has been a relatively small component of the Australian aid program it has been particularly successful. For example the Nepal Australia Forestry Project was a pioneer in the field of social forestry and its approach is now being adopted by other donors in the region. By sharing the genetic resources of Australian trees through the aid program we have been able to greatly enhance their productive potential. A review of the Seeds of Australian Trees Project has indicated that the benefits to developing countries of this small project alone total hundreds of millions of dollars. The Dongmen Forestry Project in Southern China used these genetic resources as well as demonstrating cost effective plantation establishment techniques to greatly reduce the cost of producing desperately needed timber for the region.

Ironically, despite the immense benefits that have been derived from the use of Australian trees there has been a backlash against the use of some of these species, particularly eucalyptus. Some environmental groups have criticized the use of eucalyptus because of its alleged adverse environmental and social impacts. We acknowledge
that the use of this species in developing countries can cause some problems if used inappropriately. At the same time I cannot accept that the answer lies in refusing to use trees which can bring such enormous benefits. Plantation eucalypts cannot provide the same quality of environment as indigenous forest and like all fast growing trees make heavy demands on soil water. However, when planted appropriately they can make a major contribution to satisfying the fuelwood and other timber needs of the poor in deforested regions, thereby relieving the pressure on indigenous timber supplies. The answer must lie in utilizing this valuable resource in a sensible and responsible way.

AIDAB will soon be embarking on several major new forestry initiatives. A proposal for Australian involvement in the Eucalyptus Technical Research and Development Centre in China is already in the design stage. This proposal involves expenditure of $10 million over six years to develop and extend the use of highly productive eucalypts in nine provinces of south east China. A feasibility study for a watershed management project in Timor, Indonesia is being planned and, of particular interest to this meeting, is that Australia is considering a significant program of cooperation with the International Centre for Research into Agroforestry (ICRAF) to utilize our particular expertise and genetic resources for the development and implementation of agroforestry in Africa.

The implementation of new agricultural techniques in developing countries is dependent on the availability of skilled personnel, able to ensure that the techniques are indeed appropriate and to introduce them to their countries. Thus sustainability is not only about the natural resource base but also about human resources. Most Australian aid activities include a training component which is essential to ensuring that the benefits of the project will continue. I am however particularly pleased to announce a new initiative in this important area of training.
The Crawford Trust was named in memory of Sir John Crawford who played such a crucial role in developing the international agricultural research system and who served as the Chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee of the CGIAR for six years. The trust will undertake short-term training focused on the specific needs of developing countries. I can now announce that the Australian Government has pledged $500,000 over the next five years for the trust. This money will be used to provide funding for training linked to Australian supported research projects and I expect it will be very effective in enhancing the sustainability of these projects. I am confident that the private sector will also recognize the great value of the training provided by the Trust and will also make a worthwhile contribution.

May I conclude by commending the important work done by the International Agricultural Research Centres. We have indicated our interest in the Centres through our funding and by our sponsorship of this meeting. We have also funded the editing and publication of a booklet to help explain the role of the CGIAR. I commend to you this publication "An Act of Faith" and assure you that I share your faith in a productive and positive future for the Centres.

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