

## **Summary: High-level Segment Roundtable 2 Realizing a Green Revolution in Africa**

Dear Honorable Ministers, representatives of Government, Major Groups, UN agencies and programmes, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to summarize for you the main points we discussed in Roundtable 2 on “Realizing a Sustainable Green Revolution in Africa”. We had a number of excellent presentations by resource persons in plenary as well as a rich discussion in the two sub-roundtables. I have tried to capture the highlights.

The importance of a uniquely African green revolution was stressed, one which is built on the three pillars of sustainable development. Speakers emphasized that much could be achieved in boosting agricultural productivity even with currently available technologies and knowledge, but that a key challenge is their wider diffusion and uptake by farmers.

Still, to feed a growing population adequately and to allow for improved nutrition under conditions of growing water scarcity, climate change, soil depletion and ecosystem degradation, business as usual will not suffice. Ministers highlighted the urgency of appropriate national and international action and greater cooperation to bring about a paradigm shift and to realize a truly sustainable green revolution that reverses the widespread trends of declining agricultural productivity and incomes.

African farmers also face steep costs or unavailability of essential agricultural inputs, high post harvest losses, and limited access to national, regional and international markets. Agricultural supply chains need to be strengthened, including post-harvest processing and storage.

Increased investment in research will be needed to boost productivity, making full use of indigenous knowledge and responding to farmers’ needs and local conditions. It was suggested that farmers and rural communities should be consulted when setting agricultural research agendas. Also, research could be more closely linked to teaching, training and extension services.

Ministers had an exchange of views with experts on what sorts of new technologies should be explored and whether certain genetically modified organisms might be considered if they could help address Africa’s food needs. Discussions focused not only on the scientific case, but on the questions of farmer and public acceptance and who would fund promising research which might have limited commercial potential.

Extension services need to be revitalized in many countries and made more representative of farmers, most of whom are women. Investments are needed in measures to reverse land degradation, in irrigation, rural roads and other infrastructure, and in health and education. Satellite technologies can be valuable in monitoring soil conditions.

Government has to make many of these investments, but it was recognized that the private sector must play a central role in expanding agricultural production and building agricultural value chains. Institutions to support private initiative need to be strengthened, including secure tenure rights, including for women farmers.

Comprehensive legislative reforms on land are being undertaken in some African countries, and it was suggested that these could be replicated elsewhere to empower farmers and rural communities. Women's empowerment was particularly stressed.

Farmers' organizations such as marketing cooperatives need to be strengthened to enable them to play a stronger role in the marketplace and to participate in agro-processing and other parts of the value chain. Such organizations can also play an important role in shaping government policies toward agriculture.

New institutions are needed to help farmers better manage their risks, including weather and climate insurance affordable to small farmers.

Participants noted the importance of efforts to diversify rural economies by promoting non-farm activities and enterprises (including sustainable tourism and management of nature reserves). In this way, migration from rural to urban areas could be reduced.

Several Ministers observed that there was a need to reengage in the WTO negotiations in the area of agriculture and reach trade agreements that are fair and will benefit developing countries.

Ministers shared information on recent commitments and on on-going and planned international technical and financial cooperation programmes, including a growing number of South-South cooperation initiatives launched to enhance agricultural production in Africa. Such programmes include training, capacity building and scholarships, sharing of satellite imagery for monitoring soils and land degradation, transfer of biofuels technology and know how, promotion of agricultural and infrastructure investments, trade financing and facilitation of market access for agricultural trade between developing countries.