

**COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
SIXTEENTH SESSION – 5 TO 16 MAY, 2008**

Statement by Gemma Adaba - Trade Union Major Group  
5 May, 2008 – 3:00 – 6:00pm (parallel Sessions)  
Regional Discussions – Africa

Thank you Chair

Sustainable development in the agricultural sector is of crucial importance to poverty eradication and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods for the millions of rural workers, small farmers and their families in sub-Saharan Africa where a large proportion of those earning less than the \$2 per day poverty threshold are to be found. Representing these workers, the trade union major group at CSD16 wish to put forward a number of concerns that need to be addressed in the context of this year's policy dialogue on Agriculture, Rural development and Land management in Africa. Within the JPOI<sup>1</sup> sustainable development paradigm of environmental, economic and social development, we wish to focus on the social pillar, and make a plea for policy interventions that directly address the constraints encountered by rural workers and their families in striving to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

Rural workers and small farmers in Africa need support for viable income-generating activities in community-based food farming and food processing. They require support for improving labour productivity through soil conservation and enrichment, access to water for household and farming needs, access to credit for food production and related activities, infrastructure development to bring their produce to market. In terms of access to credit and land tenure, gender equity concerns are paramount. Rural women in Africa are responsible for over half of the food production. Yet they lack access to credit support and oftentimes are denied land inheritance rights. Legislative provisions and policy interventions should be

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<sup>1</sup> Johannesburg Program of Implementation

put in place to overcome these constraints, and to ensure that women have the means to achieve decent livelihoods for themselves and their families.

When implementing measures to combat environmental and climate-related stresses such as drought, desertification, land degradation, and infrastructure collapse, employment dimensions should be taken into account. To accomplish this, African governments should work closely with the ILO to integrate its Decent Work Country Programs (DWCPs) into the NSDS, (National Sustainable Development Strategies). This will ensure employment intensive approaches to sustainable development, the promotion of social protection and social dialogue in order to give rural workers a say in policy decision-making that concerns them, as well as fundamental principles and rights at work.

The right to organize and to have coverage through collective agreements is especially important to ensure that rural workers benefit from the productivity gains accruing from NSDS-based improvements in the agricultural and rural sectors. The focus should be on ensuring decent and safe conditions of work, and cash transfers to rural households through fair remuneration for their labour. The decent work protections must extend to the millions of waged agricultural workers that contribute to the rural economy through their labour on plantations and land-holdings which they do not own.

Investments in sustainable agriculture need to be scaled up. In this regard, we support the calls from the floor to link the sustainable agricultural agenda to the Monterrey review process aimed at mobilizing additional resources for sustainable development.

Thank you Chair for giving the Trade Union Major Group an opportunity to speak at this Session.