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Statement

By

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Presentation of the outcome of the Africa High-Level Intersessional Meeting on “*African Agriculture in the 21st Century: Meeting the Challenges, Making a Sustainable Green Revolution*”

New York
04 May 2009

Madam Chairperson

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to congratulate you, Madam Chairperson and members of the bureau, for the excellent organization and programme of work you have placed before us. We look forward to a successful outcome of this session of the Commission.

I have the honour to present to the 17th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development the report of the Africa High-Level Intersessional Meeting for this session of the CSD. The Government of the Republic of Namibia was honored to host the African Intersessional High-level Meeting on **African Agriculture in the 21st Century: Meeting the Challenges, Making a Sustainable Green Revolution** in preparation for this policy session of the CSD on 9 – 10 February 2009 in Windhoek.

The intersessional meeting underscored the importance that Africa attach to the current thematic cycle, namely, agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. The importance of agriculture and rural development to the African continent cannot be emphasized given the fact that the majority of our continent's populations still live in rural areas where they depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihoods.

The meeting deliberated on the state of African agriculture in plenary and roundtable sessions and concluded its business with the adoption of the **“Windhoek High-Level Ministerial Declaration on African Agriculture in the 21st Century: Meeting the Challenges, Making a Sustainable Green Revolution”**.

The meeting observed that the challenges facing African agriculture needed to be addressed with a sense of urgency. The meeting further noted that there was a broad consensus on what the challenges were and what needed to be done to overcome them as reflected in the outcomes of the Rome and Madrid conferences on Food Security. What was needed is political will on the side of African governments to take the necessary measures and for the international community to provide appropriate and adequate support. In this regard, the Windhoek Ministerial Declaration calls for the acceleration of the

achievement of the target of the 2003 Maputo Declaration that calls for raising the share of national budgets devoted to agriculture and rural development to at least 10%. It also appeals for international support for the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The daunting challenges of achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, were also recognized, as well as the current financial and economic crisis, global food crisis, energy and the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change. These challenges require early and concerted global action if the African countries are to attain food security and the global goal of reducing by half the number of undernourished people by 2015.

The meeting expressed support for calls for a sustainable African Green Revolution to help boost agricultural productivity, food production and to attain food security on the continent. The uniqueness of the African Green Revolution is to be underpinned by the diversity of the ecosystems on which African agriculture depends for its productivity, including those provided by forests, and the recognition that bio-diversity in agricultural ecosystems can provide such benefits as resilience to climate, pest and other threats to African agriculture. The sustainability of the African Green Revolution will stem from its ability to draw on the experiences of both the Asian's and Latin American's, thereby learning from the successes of and avoiding the mistakes that were made in those regions, particularly with regards to striking a balance among the three pillars of sustainable development, namely economic development, social development and the protection of the environment.

It was noted that a sustainable African Green Revolution will not depend only on improved seeds and fertilizers but must be built on a range of complementary investments in rural development, many of which will need to be undertaken by the public sector – including rural roads, rural electrification, health and education. In this regard, the Ministerial declaration stresses the need for an active engagement of the State in supporting agriculture, especially small-scale agriculture through the provision of inter alia, rural infrastructure, supporting agricultural research and development, extension services, and in creating an enabling policy

environment that provides incentives to innovation and risk taking by farmers.

It was further noted that livestock production mixed crop-livestock systems played an important role in providing income and food security and in reducing farmers' risk. The support to enhance the productivity and sustainability of such systems as well as other systems characteristic of African agriculture should enjoy priority.

A sustainable African Green Revolution therefore, needs to be tailored to the specificities of the continent's highly diverse agro-ecological conditions, farming systems and socio-cultural contexts.

The need to transform African agriculture through an enabling environment of policy, institutions, infrastructure and investment in scientific research, technology development and dissemination was also emphasized, as well as the provision of the latest scientific knowledge and experience in applying techniques of sustainable land, soil and water management.

Madam Chairperson

The adverse effects of drought, desertification, land degradation and loss of biodiversity on the African continent are highlighted in the Ministerial declaration while emphasis is also placed on the importance of sustainable land management, including the need to reclaim dry and degraded land to make it propitious to agriculture in order to offer new economic opportunities and improved prospects for sustainable livelihoods for affected rural populations as part of the process of improving biodiversity conservation.

The declaration underlines in this regard the potential of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to contribute to addressing food security, particularly by protecting land from becoming degraded, and African Ministers pledged in this regard their commitment to implementing the Ten Year Strategy and Framework while calling on donors to enhance their financial support for UNCCD, including its fourth strategic objective and stressed the need to provide substantial resources during the fifth replenishment period of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

While acknowledging the importance of the export of agriculture products for Africa's economic growth, the African Ministers also expressed concern about the global policy-induced constraints resulting from trade and macroeconomic policies that are biased against the export of agricultural products. In this regard, the declaration stresses the need to promote Africa's international trade, including through regional integration and greater integration into the global economy and the fulfillment of the commitment to a well-functioning, universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system which promotes sustainable development. They called for the redoubling of efforts towards the achievement of a development-oriented outcome of the Doha Round of trade negotiations.

African Ministers further urged developed countries to support agriculture development in Africa by ensuring greater access to their markets as well as to provide support to capacity building of African producers to achieve compliance with relevant international standards. They further urged the international community to promote and facilitate access to the development, acquisition, transfer and diffusion of technologies and corresponding know-how to African countries and called for increased technical and financial assistance to African countries for strengthening their national innovation capacity, inter alia, through research and development (R&D) to increase agricultural production and improve competitiveness.

Madam Chairperson

Distinguished Delegates

Cognizant of the fact that enhanced financial and technical support for crop and livestock research and development is a high priority, including on varieties and methods adapted to climate change, African Ministers urged the international financial institutions to increase significantly their support to investment in agriculture and rural development in Africa in order to ensure food security, increase incomes and eradicate poverty.

The Ministers also recognized that women constitute a significant proportion of African subsistence farmers and stressed the importance of empowering women, including through more secure land tenure, and to ensure their full participation in decision making in areas of agriculture, rural development and natural resource management.

The Ministers further acknowledged with appreciation the valuable contribution made by major groups, academia, and other experts in promoting African agriculture and emphasized the importance of their continued role in promoting a sustainable green revolution in Africa.

Having deliberated carefully and critically on the challenges facing agriculture in Africa and on the way forward to best address those challenges, the African Ministers offered a number of recommendations for consideration by the Commission on Sustainable Development during this session:

- a) Governments and international donors should substantially increase financial support to agricultural and livestock research centres in Africa, working to make them more effective and efficient not only in generating innovations but also in diffusing them to farmers.
- b) Governments should help small-scale farmers to better manage the various risks they face, including price, weather, climate and natural disaster risks, by mitigating risk, assuming a share of the risk, and promoting the development of agricultural insurance markets.
- c) Governments and international institutions should work to rebuild and reorient agricultural extension services, where appropriate, to make greater use of farmer-to-farmer extension, including through field schools for training farmers as extension workers, combining their traditional knowledge with contemporary science and technology.
- d) Governments should work with development partners to mobilize investments in needed infrastructure for agriculture and rural development, including irrigation, roads, electricity and communications technologies.
- e) Agricultural research institutions should work closely with farmers in developing and applying new technologies, in a process of co-innovation, and should also endeavor to learn from farmers to enhance their own research efforts.
- f) Governments may wish to provide subsidized inputs to small-scale farmers as a way of promoting agricultural production and enhanced food security; timely access to inputs and credit is critical.
- g) Government policies for agriculture need to encourage strong backward and forward linkages through the development and strengthening of the entire agricultural supply chain, from input, equipment and credit suppliers to marketing institutions.

- h) Pre and post harvest technologies should be diffused more widely to enable farmers to realize greater value from their crops.
- i) Governments should work to ensure that credit and other financial facilities are more readily available to small-scale farmers, including through loan subsidies and guarantees.
- j) Governments should encourage the formation of agricultural cooperatives to enhance farmers' earning power, and farmers' associations to encourage knowledge sharing and technology diffusion.
- k) The empowerment of women farmers needs to be enhanced by Governments, including through secure land tenure, recognizing that they are a majority of agricultural producers and make decisions that affect investment and productivity.
- l) Governments, in cooperation with the research community and with support from the international donor community, should undertake rigorous comparative assessments of alternative agricultural models and cropping systems in the major agro-ecological zones of Africa.
- m) Governments should coordinate agricultural policies across natural resource sectors, for example by developing mutually compatible forests and agricultural policies.
- n) Governments should use the UNCCD frameworks and processes to assess and monitor progress made in reclaiming degraded and drylands.
- o) Governments should mainstream the ten-year strategy of the UNCCD into their national and regional policy platforms with a view to improving the livelihoods of affected populations and improving affected ecosystems.
- p) Governments should implement National Action Plans (UNCCD) and NAPAs (UNFCCC) in a synergistic fashion for adaptation to climate change.
- q) Governments should monitor the implementation of the CSD resolutions relevant to agriculture in the African Peer Review Mechanism and consider a focused Regional Interministerial Committee led by Agriculture Ministers.
- r) North-South and South-South cooperation should be further enhanced in such areas as biofuels, drylands agriculture and combating desertification.
- s) International financial institutions and other funding agencies should, as needed, put in place streamlined procedures for timely disbursement of funds for food and agricultural input purchases.

