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Thursday, 25 February 2009 Thematic Discussion on Africa Statement of Italy

Delivered by Mr Paolo Soprano – Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea

Mme Chairperson, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Italy associates and aligns itself with the statement made by the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union and would like to further highlight some specific issues.

Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate change and climate variability, as well as to desertification and repeated drought phenomena, and this situation is exacerbated by low resilience capacity.

A number of countries in Africa already face semi-arid conditions that make agriculture challenging, and climate change will be likely to reduce the length of growing season as well as force large regions of marginal agriculture out of production. Projected reductions in yield in some countries could be as much as 50% by 2020, and crop net revenues could fall by as much as 90% by the end of the century, with small-scale farmers being the most affected. This would adversely affect food security in the continent.

In line with the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development (recently confirmed in Doha) and the outcome of the Accra Conference on Aid Effectiveness, Italy in its capacity as President of 2009 G-8 will give high priority to co-operation with African countries and will promote a systemic development approach that will take into account every factor that can trigger sustainable development processes, including peace and security, democratic governance, institution building, and innovative and effective financial tools, in an integrated perspective.

The poverty challenge is so difficult and complex that will require a mobilization of all the available resources (investments, trade, innovative financing sources, debt cancellation, and remittances) and of all the stakeholders (public, private, civil society, both in traditional donor countries and in emerging economies). Accordingly

with this integrated approach we would like to put into effect a mechanism for monitoring the comprehensive progress that the G-8 has achieved in combating poverty, examining the impact of the G-8 initiatives.

With reference to the wider MDGs' agenda, the achievement of which is particularly relevant to Africa, the Italian G-8 Presidency intends to focus on few priority areas:

- water and sanitation
- food security,
- and global health and education.

The G-8 Presidency's action in water and sanitation seeks to define with the African partners a joint strategy centred on: the promotion of integrated management of water resources, and national or regional coordination mechanisms among beneficiary countries, donors, and local actors that foster public-private partnerships and greater investments into the area.

With reference to food security, we will support the establishment of the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, involving all the stakeholders (UN High-level Taskforce, donors, the private sector, civil society) and in particular the African Countries, to restore the central position of agriculture and food security in development strategies.

The Global Partnership on Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition will promote effective food security action at the global and country level, for greater coordination among the stakeholders, more investments to increase agricultural yields, and better responses to emergencies. The process of establishing the Global Partnership on Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition will be discussed at the G8 Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Development.

With regard to global health, the priorities will be the strengthening of the health system and the reduction in maternal and infant mortality.

Finally, in the area of education, in its capacity as Chair of the *Fast Track Initiative* within the "Education for All" programme, we will promote a strengthening of the programme to make its action more effective, giving greater emphasis to the issues of quality education, women's education, and educational access in conflict and post-conflict areas.

We are confident, Madame Chair, that at the end of the Italian G-8 Presidency we will be able to report on concrete and tangible results in all the above mentioned areas.

Thank you.