

Madam Chairperson,

Let me first fully align myself with the statement made by the Czech Republic on behalf of the EU.

Africa is a top priority in development cooperation policy of the Netherlands. We aim to commit half of our development assistance budget to Sub-Sahara Africa. We support, among many other initiatives and programmes, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme under the New Partnership for Africa's Development NEPAD, which strengthens the ownership by African countries of their development process. The Netherlands is a generous supporter to the multi-donor trust fund for NEPAD.

To enhance the effectiveness of development assistance, The Netherlands is a strong supporter of implementation of the Paris Principles for Aid Effectiveness. By implementing these principles we not only enhance ownership by receiving countries, we also make sure that the flow of assistance is harmonised and well coordinated.

Madam chair, my country attaches great value to Good Governance. In the context of the desired increase of sustainable agricultural production, this means that governments play a facilitating role in developing markets and an infrastructure, and also by establishing an adequate regulatory legal framework.

Madam Chair,

In our view it is key in CSD 17 to agree on what we all can do to ensure that a real Green Revolution in Africa can take place. This means we have to listen to Africa. The regional Ministerial Meeting in Windhoek has provided very useful recommendations to make the Green Revolution work. Investment and activities need to be tailored to the specificities of the continent's highly diverse agro-ecological conditions, farming systems and socio-cultural contexts.

Productivity improvements can be achieved through technological as well as through other means. In this respect I would like to highlight the importance to take a gender perspective into account. Research has shown that in regions where women enjoy equal access to education as men, crop yields are between 7 and 22% higher. When women finish primary education, agricultural production rises even 24%! That is why The Netherlands invests in education and training for women and girls through a 70 million euro fund specifically for the achievement of MDG 3.

Access to microfinance, insurance and small business credit offers the poor the opportunity to start their own business. This is especially important for women. The Netherlands supports these initiatives through a wide array of partners, among which the Consultative Group to assist the Poor and Women's World Banking.

Finally, Madam Chair, let's not forget the farmers themselves! Farmers do have extensive knowledge about the wide range of African farming systems that vary both across and within major agro-ecological zones. Thus, farmer organisations, both locally and national should be consulted when agricultural policies are being developed.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson