

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF ECOWAS MEMBER STATES BY THE
DELEGATE OF GHANA AT THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs): DISCUSSION ON
POVERTY ERADICATION, NEW YORK, 18 APRIL, 2013**

Co-Chairs,

1. I am honoured to take the floor on behalf of ECOWAS Member States. We wish to align ourselves with the statement delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

2. Thanks to the Technical Support Team, our discourse on Poverty Eradication is being guided by an informative brief, which addressed the critical aspects of the phenomenon of poverty.

3. The issue of poverty has since the 90's been at the core of global efforts to address the myriad of socio-economic challenges confronting an increasingly interdependent world. In appreciation of the serious implications of poverty in any development agenda, "Eradication of Poverty and Hunger" was rightly designated the first Millennium Development Goal. It is therefore imperative that the ongoing process to define a post-2015 development agenda, should further thoroughly examine the issue of poverty from the right perspective.

Co-Chairs,

4. Poverty continued to be pervasive in West Africa, even in countries that performed relatively well with respect to economic growth. This is partly due to the limited ability of many West African countries to generate sufficient and high productivity jobs. A host of macroeconomic, microeconomic and institutional factors have contributed to this experience.

5. Growth rates recorded by many West African countries were not robust and sustainable enough to instigate a strong and sustainable labour demand. Indeed, many countries in West Africa experienced a sharp decline in trade due to the ongoing economic and financial crises. Only a few countries were able to sustain robust economic growth rates over prolonged periods of time. GDP growth rates tend to be very volatile. Such volatility compounded the perceived risks in these countries and lowered expectations of future returns on investments made in these countries. As a result, private investments and job creation were rather limited.

6. Another growth pattern that had significant bearing on the level of employment was the nature of the economic expansion. Economic growth within the sub-region was mostly driven by capital-intensive sectors, such as mining, oil and gas production. These sectors have limited linkages with other key sectors, such as agriculture and manufacturing that constitute the main sources of livelihoods for the poor.

Co-Chairs,

7. Microeconomic and institutional factors also undermined the capacity of many West African countries to generate sufficient decent jobs to absorb the growing labour force. Many citizens from the ECOWAS sub-region could not reap the benefits of growth, either as producers of goods and services or as suppliers of labour, due to lack of skills and limited access to complementary assets, such as credit and good infrastructural services, as well as a worsening state of insecurity. These factors account for the relatively poor state of health and educational conditions in our countries. Conversely, we are also mindful that poor health and mismatch in education negatively influence productivity, growth and poverty.

8. Co-Chairs, given the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, we are of the view that redressing the menace requires both holistic and bold response by the global community. Initiatives to overcome the challenge of poverty should not only remove the constraints to strong and sustainable growth but also improve the social and human conditions in our countries.

9. We also recognise that poverty is not restricted to income levels and expenditure shortfalls. As a phenomenon that affects both developing and developed countries, its negative impact in our sub-region manifest in multiple **folds** including commodity price volatility.

10. Furthermore, we would like to stress that education is fundamental for human development and poverty alleviation. It is also important that the SDGs framework should take due cognisance of the inter-linkages between the SDGs and social conditions, which tend to have grave impact on the quality of health, life expectancy, infant mortality rate, gender equality, illiteracy rates, and education-gross enrolment in primary schools.

11. The importance of complementary roles of both national and international authorities in dealing with the challenge of poverty cannot be over-emphasized. We are aware that implementation of the SDGs will be a national responsibility. However, we are mindful of the Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) as the guiding principle of the SDGs whose implementation will be a national responsibility. However, we would like to stress that a just, fair and transparent international trade and financial system will significantly enhance the capacity of our governments to develop and put in place the requisite measures to curtail some of the difficulties associated with poverty.

12. Finally, Co-Chairs, ECOWAS Member States wish to reiterate the expressed view that poverty eradication can be achieved through concerted efforts by all stakeholders. We further urge the international community to forge closer cooperation and economic partnerships in our shared objective of eradicating poverty and making the world a better place for all.

I thank you.