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Thematic Discussion: Africa

Speech of Italy

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

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Italy would like to associate itself with the intervention made by Slovenia on behalf of the European Union and I would like to highlight some specific issues.

Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate change and climate variability 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.

Projections given by the last IPCC assessment report show also new data and figures confirming the critical situation regarding sea level rise in Africa.

Sea-level rise will likely increase the high socio-economic and physical vulnerability of coastal cities and will have implication for health.. The cost of adaptation to sea-level rise in Africa could amount to at least 5-10% of GDP.

Long term global strategy and measures should be designed and should start immediately.

Africa is the main focus of the Italian Development Co-operation. We have recently doubled aid to African countries which suffer of structural agricultural problems. Our overall contribution has reached more than 130 million euro.

Italy has taken the lead in addressing these issues and is playing a major role in bridging the European Union with the Mediterranean, not only for its geographical position but also as a linking element between the historical and cultural traditions of North Africa, Middle East and the Balkans, mainly focusing its efforts in two strategic sectors strictly related to climate change issues: energy and water. In view of this, allow me to recall:

- the MEDREP Type II Initiative for the promotion of renewable energies in the Mediterranean basin, with several projects already ongoing in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia;
- cooperation projects on water management such as the project on “Innovative means of increasing water resources in Egypt” aimed at relieving water shortage related problems in small

villages in central Sinai Peninsula affected by severe drought; the ADRISCOSM Partnership for the construction of a system for the prediction of marine and coastal current variability in some Adriatic Countries; “The Water Programme for Environmental Sustainability: towards Adaptation Measures to Human and Climate Changes Impacts”, in collaboration with UNESCO, aimed at developing sustainable use of water resources in African Countries taking also into account implementation of adaptation measures to human and climate change impacts.

Furthermore the Italian government has signed Memorandum of Understandings with Kenya, Mozambique, Congo Brazzaville and Nigeria for the promotion of scientific knowledge and transfer of technologies, expertise and experiences in the climate change and bioenergy issues.

The African and European countries need to strengthen the dialogue on climate change impacts and on mitigation and adaptation tools and measures.

To this end the “Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Climate Change (CMCC)” has been established in Italy, acting as a network of Public and Private Research institutions focused on research on impacts of climate change over the Mediterranean area.

The Euro-Mediterranean Centre for the Climate Change uses models and simulations in order to realize studies of climate change impact on the economy, on agriculture, on sea and earth ecosystems, on coastal zones and health. The Euro-Mediterranean Centre for the Climate Change can be considered as a platform for the European-African dialogue finalized to the promotion of low carbon technologies and know-how sharing and transfer.

Furthermore, among various initiatives designed to help land management and agriculture, there is also a long standing co-operation with World Meteorological Organization for realizing systems of early warning and reaction to drought and floods for the countries of Central Africa.

Italy is also among the major contributors to the World Tourism Organization STEP Programme, already recollected by the WTO panellist Mr. Cabrini, to promote sustainable tourism in Africa.

Mr. Chairman, since many years Africa and agriculture should have receive higher attention as priorities in the Development agenda.

The food crisis combined with global environmental challenges call for getting higher the priority of Africa and environment in Development Co-operation.

We expect CSD and the next FAO Food Summit in Rome will favour this evolution and that deliberations of international institutions specialised in dealing with these problems will be more and more heard in the future.