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PRESENTATION

BY

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AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
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**ON THE RESULTS OF
THE AFRICAN REGION HIGH-LEVEL
INTERSESSIONAL MEETING FOR CSD-17**

**AT THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARTORY MEETING
FOR CSD-17**

**New York
23 February 2009**

Madam Chairperson

I have the honour to present the results of the Intersessional High-Level Meeting on "African Agriculture in the 21st Century: Meeting the Challenges, Making a Sustainable Green Revolution" that took place in Windhoek from 9 to 10 February 2009 to the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting of the Seventeenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 17).

The meeting that was co-organized by our Ministry of Environment and Tourism and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Division for Sustainable Development), was attended by about 120 participants from both within and outside.

Having deliberated on the state of African agriculture both in plenary and roundtable meetings, the meeting 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"** in which among others, the ministers recognized with a sense of urgency the need to achieve the vision of Africa's Heads of State and Government that provides a strategic direction to plans and action programmes, including the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The meeting underscored the urgency of addressing the continent's development needs through among others investments in agriculture for a uniquely African Green Revolution. The uniqueness of the African Green Revolution is to be underpinned by the diversity of ecosystems on which African agriculture depends for its productivity, including those provided by forests, and the recognition that biological diversity in agricultural ecosystems can provide such benefits as resilience to climate, pest and other threats and disturbances. An African Green Revolution will also be unique in that it will draw on the experiences of both the Asians and Latin Americans, thereby 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.

The African Green Revolution needs to be tailored to the specificities of the continent's highly diverse agro-ecological conditions, farming systems and socio-cultural contexts. In this regard, due consideration should be given to the role played by livestock in African agriculture and of mixed crop-livestock systems in providing income and food security and in reducing farmers' risk.

The meeting stressed the need for enhanced active engagement of the state in supporting agriculture, especially small-scale agriculture and the critical importance of governments in providing rural infrastructure, supporting

agricultural research and development, and in creating an enabling policy environment that provides incentives to innovation and risk taking by farmers.

African ministers are convinced that the challenges facing African agriculture need to be addressed with a sense of urgency and that there is broad consensus on what the main challenges and what is needed to confront them, as reflected in the outcomes of the Rome and Madrid conferences on Food Security. What is needed now is strong political will of African governments to take the necessary actions and of the international community to support those actions. In this regard, it calls for the acceleration of the achievement of the goal of the 2003 Maputo Declaration target of raising the share of national budgets devoted to agriculture and rural development to at least 10% while appealing for international support for the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP).

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

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

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 while also improving biodiversity conservation.

The declaration underlines in this regard the potential of the UNCCD to contribute to addressing food security, particularly by protecting land from becoming degraded, and the ministers pledged 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 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.

The Ministerial declaration urges 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. It further urges the international community to promote and facilitate access to the development, acquisition, transfer and diffusion of the technologies and corresponding know-how to African countries and calls 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.

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, the declaration urges 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.

On the question of biofuels, the declaration notes the growing global demand for biofuels which has opened up significant new opportunities and challenges for African food production and expressed their intent to develop their biofuels sectors in ways which are consistent with their own food security and with principles of environmental sustainability and social equity.

The Ministerial declaration recognizes that women constitute a significant proportion of African subsistence farmers and stresses 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 declaration acknowledges 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;

The ministers also appreciated the participation and support of the UN system in particular the UNDESA, other international organizations, and civil society in preparing for and contribution to this meeting;

Having deliberated carefully and critically on the challenges facing agriculture in Africa and on the way forward to best address those challenges, the ministers offered the following recommendations for consideration by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its 17th 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.

They concluded by affirming their wish that the Declaration be presented by the Minister of Environment and Tourism of the Republic of Namibia, in her capacity as Co-Chair of the meeting, to the 17th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Indeed, a request has been made to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to publish and circulate the declaration as an official document of the Organization.

Madam Chairperson

Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

I thank you for your kind attention.