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STATEMENT

BY

HON. JULIANA AZUMAH-MENSAH
MINISTER FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS

AT THE

56TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

ON

**AGENDA ITEM 3: FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON
WOMEN AND TO THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY, ENTITLED "WOMEN 2000: GENDER EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT
AND PEACE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY"**

NEW YORK, 28 FEBRUARY, 2012

Chairperson,

It is my pleasure to address the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women meeting. I wish to warmly congratulate you as well as the other members of the Bureau on your election to steer the affairs of the Commission in addressing current challenges in the empowerment of rural women, which has direct impact on their role in poverty and hunger eradication. My delegation associates itself with the statements made by Algeria on behalf of Group of 77 and China and Tunisia on behalf of the African Group.

Ghana regards the development of the rural economy as key to its socio-economic and sustainable development. This is reflected in our Medium Term Development Framework, the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA). Ghana continues to promote the empowerment of rural women who constitute 53% of rural households and fall within the poorest 18% of the population. Rural women in households' economic unit are however responsible for almost 70% of household production and therefore Ghana's food security.

To address the needs of rural women, interventions made include subsidies on farm inputs, among others, and the introduction of the block farm system to leverage resources for agricultural production among smallholder farmers and the award of prizes to them during the National Farmer's Day celebrations.

Chairperson,

The **AGRI-BASED RURAL ENTERPRISE PROJECT** promotes poverty reduction in rural areas, through the development of rural enterprises in participating districts. Strategies adopted included improved access to rural financing, technology transfer and skills development. The project focused on women, the unemployed and underemployed youth.

In Northern Rural Growth Programme (NRGP) (2008-2014) a project funded with the support of IFAD was designed to train rural women in good agricultural practices to increase productivity and incomes, and is targeted at **1.56 million** women. Ghana with the support of the UN Women, has established a Gender Responsive Budgeting Monitoring Unit (GRBMU) within the National Gender Machinery to ensure that sector budgets are gender sensitive and addresses the peculiar needs of rural women.

With regard to gender-based violence, Ghana is in the process of developing inter/intra agency protocols, community response systems and training manuals for stakeholders, to guide the implementation of the law on domestic violence that mostly affect rural women. In order to address existing challenges of maternal mortality for the achievement of MDGs 4 & 5, provision has been made in the National Health Insurance Scheme to provide free maternal care for women and in particular, rural women.

Chairperson,

Public consultation for the development of an Affirmative Action Legislation to ensure the rural women's participation in governance and decision-making has been launched. We recognize that rural women have an important role to play in ensuring peace and security and as a result the Ghana National Action Plan (GHANAP) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, will be launched in the coming weeks to begin its implementation.

Today, Ghana with the support and collaboration of CSOs has implemented a number of interventions targeted at rural women. FIDA Ghana has trained over 100 paralegals in selected districts, to act as change agents with regard to negative socio-cultural practices. WiLDAF has implemented the Legal Literacy Project in some Cocoa growing areas with the objective of empowering rural women farmers to know their legal and human rights. ActionAid Ghana (AAG) through its work on the Women's Rights and Food Rights themes has used rights analysis to assist rural women, small holder farmers to articulate their needs and challenges and demand for appropriate redress.

Chairperson,

In spite of these achievements, rural women are confronted with several challenges in terms of accessing technology, land, credit, extension services, markets, water and formal education that would enhance production as well as ensure food security for families and assist in breaking the cycle of poverty.

The international community, United Nations and other organizations must intensify efforts to prioritize funding for agricultural and rural development and provide support for the implementation of policies and innovative partnerships with all stakeholders to promote gender equality and the empowerment of rural women. We identify with the recommendations in the Secretary General's report and aim to accelerate the development of policies and timely interventions that would provide rural women with an avenue to enhance their productivity and contribute towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

I thank you.