Mr. Chairman,

On Agenda Item 25: Agriculture Development, Food Security and Nutrition, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are members of the United Nations. At the outset, I wish to convey our appreciation to the Secretary General for the Reports A/68/311 and A/68/73-E/2013/59 before us today. CARICOM associates with the statement by the distinguished representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Agriculture development, food security and nutrition are of strategic importance to the continued stability, security and sustainable development of the Caribbean Region. It is also of special significance on account of its contribution to poverty eradication, sustaining livelihoods, and reversing the high incidence of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) now prevalent in the Region, and providing employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. CARICOM member states have thus given prominence to these issues in the overall development programme of the sub-region and more recently have focused on the enabling environment needed to advance outcomes for the benefit of the Community.

Agriculture offers significant opportunities to foster growth and development by providing the intersectoral linkages across the various productive sectors in CARICOM and the interlinkages between the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It also contributes to efforts to overcome poverty and entrenched inequality within and across countries by offering increased availability of and access to food, increased opportunities for employment, the bridging of disparities between rural and urban areas, including through increased emphasis on the promotion of small holder / subsistence agricultural production and the greater involvement of women, youth and indigenous people among others in more meaningful developmental activities.
The Twelfth Caribbean Week of Agriculture held earlier this month, from 4 - 12 October in Georgetown Guyana, has reinforced the significance of agriculture to the development of CARICOM. The observances, under the theme - Linking the Caribbean for Regional Food and Nutrition Security and Rural Development, reaffirmed the need to urgently address the peculiar constraints the region faces to enhancing production and productivity through accelerated efforts towards modernization as well as in achieving a reorientation of the place, role and function of agriculture in the society.

Mr. Chairman,

Caribbean agriculture continues to be beset by a number of factors, particularly the high exposure and vulnerability of our Region to natural disasters, the need to adapt to climate change, and difficulties in exploiting economies of scale, due to small population size. In this regard, the Region has identified a number of critical constraints which include: limited financing and inadequate levels of new investments; deficient and uncoordinated risk management measures; low levels of research and development; weak land and water distribution and management systems; inadequate transportation systems, particularly for perishables; weak and non-integrated market information and intelligence systems; and also the lack of skilled and qualified human resources. The global financial and economic crisis has also had a major negative impact on the performance of the agriculture sector of the Community.

It is within the context of these challenges, that CARICOM Heads of Government adopted the Community Agricultural Policy with practical approaches to remedy many of these problems. They have also established the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA) to enhance agricultural trade. In addition, the Region continues to strengthen its collaboration with FAO through the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy which aims to ensure that food production, processing, marketing, food safety and agricultural public health systems are capable of providing safe, adequate, nutritious and affordable food for consumers at all times.

At its core, the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy recognizes that food and nutrition security is a multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral issue and that its achievement requires simultaneous, holistic and concerted action on a wide front, encompassing, inter alia, production (agriculture, fisheries and forestry), food processing and distribution, health and nutrition, trade, infrastructure, social welfare, education, and information and communication sectors.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM considers that the current global situation with respect to agriculture, food and nutrition security gives fresh meaning to the importance of enhancing synergies between agriculture, food security and development policies and strategies at national, regional and international levels, including by prioritizing and mainstreaming agriculture and food security into development policies.

As developing countries work to transform agriculture and build greater resilience while dealing with the multiple related challenges in an integrated manner, we call on the international community to scale up its support for these efforts. In particular, we call for greater support for regional initiatives on agriculture which
can bring benefits speedily for the primary producers, such as those involved in farming and fishing in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). For instance, the small vulnerable countries of CARICOM need targeted support for actions which can have immediate and significant impacts on the livelihoods of small holder farmers, especially to upgrade facilities in relation to reductions in food losses - mainly associated with harvesting techniques, storage and cooling facilities and to infrastructure, packaging and marketing systems.

CARICOM therefore endorses the perspective articulated in the report of the Secretary General contained in document A/ 68/ 311 that “actions along multiple dimensions are required to ensure food security”. While taking account of the fact, as articulated in the Rio+20 Outcome, that the diversity of agricultural conditions and systems requires differentiated approaches, CARICOM reaffirms that these efforts should include actions at all levels to ensure food availability, access, stability, consumption and utilization, improve health and sanitation, recognize the interlinkages between food security, water, energy and climate change and invest in sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Mr. Chairman,

Given the importance of timely action in relation to sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition, these issues should remain an important area of focus in efforts to achieve sustainable development at all levels. Indeed due consideration needs to be given to the issues related to agriculture development, food security and nutrition in the elaboration of the post 2015 development agenda and in the development of sustainable development goals. In this regard, any goal or goals in this area should foster action to remove the global constraints to greater food security, sustainable agriculture and better land use. CARICOM is of the view that a stronger global partnership for sustainable agriculture can help to catalyze greater achievement of the MDGs in the time that remains.

In conclusion, CARICOM remains committed to promoting agriculture development, food security and nutrition. Our quest is premised on transforming the agriculture sector into one that is competitive and with increased capacity to contribute to the sustained economic development of the Region. To this end, we welcome all efforts to work in partnership with the international community to achieve these goals.

I thank you.