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Statement

By

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On behalf of the African Group

On

Agenda Items 23: Agriculture development, food security and nutrition

At

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.

Our Group associates itself with the statement made by the Group of 77 and China and would like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports under this agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

Agriculture is key to Africa's development. The growth of the sector remains crucial for food security, employment and economic growth. Without the development of agriculture, no amount of efforts will transform the continent to overcome poverty and achieve sustainable development.

African countries have long realized this critical fact and have put enormous efforts to enhance production and productivity by keeping the sector high in their national development plans and strategy.

Regional initiatives have also been designed to enable countries to continue with their efforts to address the challenges of the sector. The African Union, through its New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), is providing leadership and support via the Partnership’s Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) by encouraging countries to develop investment plans and to allocate at least 10 per cent of their annual national budgets to agriculture.

Despite these developments, however, colossal challenges still surround the sector which call for a much more concerted effort to be made to enable agriculture become the driver towards transforming Africa's economies to a higher ladder of economic development.
It is important, Mr. Chairman, to underline the fact that the agriculture sector in Africa is mainly dominated by smallholder farmers. If the sector is to have a meaningful contribution in the economic development process of African countries, these farmers should be accorded the necessary attention they deserve, and efforts must be scaled-up to address their development challenges. In this regard, the African Group notes with satisfaction the decision by the Group of 8 countries in Lough Erne this year whereby they reaffirmed their commitment with scale and urgency to achieve sustainable global food and nutrition security by recognizing the critical role played by smallholder farmers, especially women.

Our Group believes that this spirit of cooperation will continue so as to meet the pressing needs of small farmers in Africa in a sustainable and effective manner.

It is also a known fact that increasing agricultural productivity in a sustainable manner has long been given a priority in the continent. Provision of infrastructure such as rural roads, irrigation, and market access plays a vital role in enhancing productivity of the sector. Ensuring that small farmers are equipped with affordable improved seeds, extension services, and technology packages, as well as affordable financing, will increase their crop production beyond subsistence. We thus call on the international community to boost its support in these areas as well.

**Mr. Chairman,**

New and emerging challenges are posing serious threats to the development of agriculture and food security. Higher energy prices coupled with the sensitivity of the sector to the extreme effects of climate change have led to the increase in the price of food and widespread droughts, particularly in Africa. We have no choice in our actions but to be firm and committed to address climate change and revert to harnessing renewable source of energy if we to increase food production and achieve food security in a sustainable manner while preserving our environment.
Our Group also takes note of the fact that agriculture has turned into an increasingly market-driven sector, as opposed to policy-driven sector. We realize that this shift brings significant investment opportunities to many developing countries, including Africa. Nevertheless, it should be known that stable and conducive global economic and trading systems, free of distortions, should exist if these developing countries are to benefit from their comparative advantage in global markets. The African Group, therefore, calls for a successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round so as to enable a multilateral trading system contribute to the promotion of agriculture and rural development and support the achievement of food security objective.

The African Group believes that the role of international organizations is critical to address the challenges of agricultural development and food and nutrition security. The Group is of the view that the United Nations development system has been essential in supporting country actions in this regard. We would like to see the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis continue to discharge its responsibilities through its coordinated approach so as to enable member states achieve sustainable and resilient rural livelihoods and food and nutrition security.

As we are now heading toward the process of formulating the post 2015 development agenda, it is extremely important for Africa to see that the issue of agriculture and food security is given the attention it deserves, with clarity and sense of measurability, in the new global development agenda. Without agriculture development and food security, Mr. Chairman, the task of eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable development hardly succeeds.

I thank you