

**Third Session of the General Assembly Open Working Group
on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
New York, 22 May 2013**

THEME:

**“FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION, SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE,
DESERTIFICATION, LAND DEGRADATION AND DROUGHT”**

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

**By H.E.Mr. ANTONIO PEDRO MONTEIRO LIMA
AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF CAPE VERDE TO THE UNITED NATIONS,**

Co-Chairs,

1. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the African Group. The Group associates itself with the Statement delivered by the Permanent representative of Fiji on behalf of the G77.
2. At the outset I wish to take this opportunity to state that Africa should be given priority in the post 2015 development agenda and what would finally be adopted as Sustainable Development Goals to contribute to the achievement of that agenda.
3. Africa is still grappling with the same challenges that plagued the region well before the ushering of the new Millennium.
4. We believe that greater impact can still be made on the implementation of the commitments made to Africa in major United Nations Summits and Conferences particularly those contained in the Millennium Declaration, the UN Declaration on New Partnership for Africa's Development, the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the 2008 political declaration.
5. Rio+20 Outcome Document underscored the key priority of the international community of supporting Africa's sustainable development efforts.
6. As a starting point, the integration of all three pillars of sustainable development, should also envision a balanced approach to the implementation of the Three Rio Conventions.
7. We believe this is a necessary undertaking which carries the aspirations of many on the continent. In addition, SDGs should promote equitable and inclusive human-centered development.
8. We would like to reiterate that SDGs should be servicing and strengthening the MDGs, thus making sure that MDGs are still valid, relevant and that they will not be an unfinished business.
9. A second generation of a revised set of current MDGs, taking into consideration the new and emerging global challenges should be the core SDGs.
10. As was expressed by the co-chair at the end of the last meeting: MDGs should be the starting point, while SDGs should be the destination. Having said that, the discussion should be structured around taking stock and evaluating progress in achieving MDGs/analyzing challenges, and obstacles, which hindered achieving MDGs/

examining options to address those challenges in the future, and to shift from quantitative goals to qualitative goals.

11. We would like also to reiterate the need to address the specific means of implementation related to each subject.

Co-chairs,

12. It is important to recall that two-thirds of the African continent is desert or dry lands. This land is vital for agriculture and food production, however nearly three-fourths of it is estimated to be degraded to varying degrees

13. Therefore, the framing of the post 2015 development agenda should not overlook the linkages between the severity of the effects of climate change on desertification, land degradation and drought as well as destruction of ecosystems, which all have a bearing on the loss of agricultural production capacity, the rise in vector diseases and the negative contribution to food insecurity.

14. Agriculture is at the heart of poverty eradication in Africa since small-scale farming systems remain the primary source of livelihoods for a significant number of Africans.

15. In that vein, we should always keep in mind the severe impact of malnutrition in terms of mortality and morbidity rates, cognitive impairment in children, low educational attainment, reduction of labor productivity and quality of life.

16. With regard to food security, the African Group is of the view that the formulation of the SDGs framework should address the following aspects: food availability, food access and food adequacy.

17. Africa needs renewed partnership in order to reverse desertification, land degradation, and combating drought on improving land productivity. We reiterate the resolve to implement the 2008-2018 ten year strategic plan and framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The international community should take a giant leap towards promoting scientific research to monitor and assess the extent of desertification, land degradation and drought in order to develop strategies of preserving the only surest resource of growing what we eat.

18. What is now required is fulfillment of international commitments to Africa to ensure the continent's diverse ecosystems are preserved and protected for the sustenance of livelihoods and for the achievement of food self sufficiency. Moreover, actions should be taken to ensure that job creation through agriculture.

19. Africa's small holder farming practices are a key source of traditional food that can only continue to be prevalent in the diet and nutrition of many households on the continent if more investment can reach the continent on management of biodiversity.

20. There is also an urgent need to reduce food waste as well as overcome barriers to market access and volatility in food prices.

21. In terms of means of implementation, we call upon the international community to enhance and support sustainable agriculture through targeted investment in agricultural sector on the continent, access to capital and infrastructure development, irrigation schemes, agricultural research and development, transfer and dissemination of clean technologies, sustainable consumption and production.

I thank you.