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STATEMENT

BY

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AT

THE THIRD SESSION OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
AT THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 22ND – 24TH MAY, 2013

Co-chairs,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The Group associates itself with the Statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Fiji on behalf of the G77 as well as by the Permanent Representative of Cape Verde on behalf of the African Group.

Agriculture, broadly understood to include crop and livestock production, fisheries and forest, provide employment, income, food and nutrition and other services to the global economy. For agrarian economies, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture is the backbone of the economy. The critical role played by agriculture in poverty eradication and development cannot be over emphasized. It has been recognized in the Technical Support Team (TST) issue brief that agricultural growth is on the average at least twice as effective in reducing poverty as growth generated in other non agricultural sectors, and eleven times more effective in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The farmers and herders in Sub-Saharan Africa are small holder farmers, who are poor and based in the rural areas. Globally, there are about 500 million smallholder households totaling 1.5 billion people. Small holdings account for about 85% of the world farms. Efforts by the international community to address sustainable agriculture should in the main focus on this group, rural development and international issues that affect sustainable agriculture production.

Our vision in West Africa is to have a modern and sustainable agriculture based on effective and efficient smallholder farms and the promotion of agricultural enterprises through the private sector. This should among others guarantee food security and secure decent incomes for agricultural workers and reduce poverty. In spite of this vision the challenges the agriculture sector faces are numerous. Low output and productivity particularly by small holder farmers, low infrastructural development such as irrigation, water, roads, transportation, storage and processing facilities, lack of investment in sustainable agricultural technologies, post harvest loss and waste in the supply chain, impacts of climate change such as droughts, floods and high temperatures, lack of access of small

holder farmers to land, credit and high cost of inputs, excessive food price volatility, promotion of conventional agricultural practices and its negative impact on the environment, inadequate international funding for agriculture as well as imbalances in global agricultural trade, particularly high subsidies in developed countries that affect the competitiveness of products from developing countries.

To facilitate the adoption of Sustainable agriculture the enabling conditions and required infrastructure have to be put in place. Governments need to increase investment in sustainable agricultural practices particularly for small holder farmers and in infrastructure. Public financing and transfer of appropriate technology by developed countries and the reduction of agricultural subsidies is essential. The Rome based UN agencies need to increase the scale of their work to promote sustainable agriculture in member states. There is also the need to implement a research and knowledge-sharing agenda towards sustainable agriculture.

The goal could be to promote sustainable agriculture and small holder farmers' livelihoods.

The targets and indicators could be based on the following issues:

- reduction of agricultural subsidies by 80% by developed countries by 2020
- trade policy in developing countries that promote small holder farmers livelihoods, food security and rural development
- Access by small holder farmers to credit, security of land tenure, markets and infrastructure
- Increase in international funding to agriculture in developing countries
- Transfer of technology to developing countries
- Resilience of food systems to shocks and changes particularly from the impact of climate change (high temperatures, floods and drought)
- Increase agricultural output and productivity
- Value addition of primary commodities, post harvest losses and waste in the supply chain

DESERTIFICATION, LAND DEGRADATION AND DROUGHT (DLDD)

Addressing DLDD can help solve global challenges such biodiversity loss, climate change, water stress, poverty and many others.

A possible goal could be sustainable land use for and by all stakeholders.

The targets could be around the following issues:

- Land and forest under sustainable land and forest management. This is a preventive approach to avoid land and forest degradation.
- Restoration or regeneration of degraded lands (20% per annum). This approach is a corrective one to restore the over 2 billion degraded lands that are suitable for restoration.

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Food security and nutrition are very important component of sustainable agricultural development. It is estimated that more than 800 million people are under nourished and most of them are in sub Saharan countries especially in children where it is exhibited in stunted growth and underweight. The challenges to this situation are multi-dimensional, such as economic growth, high population dynamics, gender inequalities and natural resource management

The goal for this theme could be to ensure global progress towards food security and nutrition. Food security and nutrition targets could be based on the Istanbul Plan of Action, the World Health Assembly's six global targets as well as the Secretary Generals Zero Hunger Challenge.