

AFRICAN UNION



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UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone 517 700 Fax: 517844
website: www.africa-union.org

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STATEMENT

BY

H.E. Dr Jean PING

CHAIRPERSON, AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

AT THE WORLD FOOD SUMMIT

16- 18 November, 2009

Rome, Italy

Your Excellencies, (Protocol)

Excellencies, Heads of Delegations

Development Partners

Participants and Delegates

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Repositioning Africa to Mitigate its Food Security Challenges

1. I would like to register my sincere appreciation to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization for organizing the 2009 World Food Summit and giving me the privilege to address this august assembly on the *status quo* of our progress on the African Food Security strategies on behalf of the African Union Commission. My presence here today is to sensitize the global community on the desperate dare need of our continent to arrest the ever present menace of food insecurity, hunger and poverty. Secondly, I will endeavour to inform Your Excellencies on the progress achieved through our modest efforts to put in place a continental initiative to curtail food insecurity.
According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in its publication *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2009*, the global economic slowdown, following on the heels of the food crisis in 2006/08, has deprived an additional 100 million people worldwide of access to adequate food. There have been marked increases in hunger in all of the world's major regions. One out of every six humans is now classified as severely undernourished. This is a staggering statistic and very much unacceptable. Allow me once again Your Excellencies to state that it is very clear in our minds that the food security situation in Africa is **acute** and **deteriorating** giving us all a cause for concern. As a result of drastic climate events, agriculture and rural livelihoods have been adversely affected in recent times. In addition, the need for food aid coupled with rising global food prices and its multiplier effects were at record levels in the last few years coupled with rife incidences of droughts that left our farmlands bare and the garner empty especially in most arid and semi-arid areas. The Horn of Africa is for example synonymous with landmark nutritional disasters and famines that have left the populations decimated due to starvation. This year alone, more than 20 million people are estimated to be at risk of starvation.
2. Sustainable solutions to the underlying problems causing food insecurity will by necessity require robust initiatives and commensurate political will to address the problems of food insecurity using all means at our disposal. It is therefore apt that there are a few global forums dovetailing into the discussions on hunger-related issues at a very high level hosted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations, including World Food Day and the World Summit of Heads of State and Government on Food Security at this time.

3. With an agriculture-led economy in Africa where over 80% of the work force is anchored on agriculture, it is logical that agricultural development rightly deserves all the attention it is currently receiving as the engine of our industrial revolution and economic growth. Allow me Your Excellencies to state in no unmistakable terms that agriculture is NOT just an engine for our industrial and economic growth as it has been popularly quoted. It is the LIVELIHOOD of most Africans. Therefore, we do understand from an experiential point of view and our recent experiences on food and nutrition security in the continent have culminated in our current corporate strategy to put a foolproof system in place to contain the undesirable outcomes of poverty and hunger in Africa. In addition, the consequences of hunger and malnutrition on the productivity and development of humans especially with the interaction of the scourge of HIV/Aids on food production is a growing cause for concern
4. From the recent global food crisis, we have all learnt that investing in agriculture is investing in the future and this is why investing in agriculture and rural infrastructure is crucial in times like these. Africa has had a phenomenal decline in per capita food productivity during the last thirty years rendering the continent food insecure and consequently the largest destination of food aid and net food importer. Permit me Your Excellencies to cite the case of Malawi and its celebrated shift from a net food grain importer to a net food grain exporter. We now know that taming the menace of food insecurity is not such a tall order.
5. The inclement impacts of climate change are a daily reminder of the need to urgently put in place sustainable strategies to palliate these undesirable outcomes. The need to address food and nutritional securities of our peoples in the context of changing climatic events is now at all time high. Climate is changing fast and so is the vulnerability of the agrarian communities. There is therefore the need to react equally as fast as the climate is changing if we will avert calamities. And it is predicted that this drought will be followed by heavier-than-usual El Nino rains, which are likely to herald greater climatic stresses in terms of severe droughts and floods. East Africa is currently experiencing the El Nino rains.

Excellencies,

6. Please allow me to present to you some of our strategic interventions and institutional processes that we are putting in place to address this phenomenal food insecurity confronting Africa. More than ever before, there has been an uncommon resolve by the African Heads of State and Government to address the African food security concerns headlong.
7. The African struggle with the twin challenge of hunger and poverty and their domino effects has attracted the attention of African leadership for decades with

several attempts at national, regional and continental levels to combat them. Due to under-capitalization, average productivity of agricultural land in Africa has been estimated at about half of that in Asia and Latin America during the last decade. The situation calls for greater investment in agriculture in Africa and it is imperative that the agricultural sector must be placed at the centre of the region's development agenda if the goals of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 are to be realized. It is this call that the African Heads of State and Government at the 13th Heads of State and Government Summit heeded to and reaffirmed their commitment to accelerating investment in the agricultural sector.

8. In April 2009, in the run up to the 13th Ordinary Session of the Summit of the African Heads of State and Governments held in Sirte Libya, the African Union convened the Ministerial Conference on Agriculture, Livestock and Lands. The Conference *inter alia* resolved with a collective responsibility and commitment to advance Africa's Agriculture with the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) as its framework for bringing about the required institutional and policy reforms, capacity development and increased investments thereby enhancing agricultural development with direct impact on food security and socio-economic growth. The Assembly further resolved to provide necessary leadership on comprehensive Africa-wide approaches to address the root causes of poverty and hunger further resolved to develop and implement continental and regional level strategies that embrace climate change mitigation and adaptation measures as integral components of our agricultural development agendas. Finally the Assembly sought to expand investments in specially targeted social protection policies and measures through predictable public support best suited for local circumstances with special focus on most vulnerable and poor sections of society.
9. During the last summit of the African Heads of State and Governments, the African Union Commission, leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the objectives of CAADP as contained in the Maputo Declaration of July 2003. Let me state clearly that African Leaders, in their decisions around the Summit Theme "*Investing in Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Security*", pledged to meet their individual and collective responsibilities and to provide the necessary leadership and resources required to accelerate implementation of CAADP and related decisions.
10. The CAADP has offered and delivered a much awaited continental platform on which sustainable bankable initiatives can be anchored. It offers a plethora of opportunities for diverse players especially our development partners on a level playing ground and on a transparent basis to contribute strategically to a common continental development initiative spearheaded by the African Union.
11. In a swift response on the part of our Development Partners, only a few weeks after the 13th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, African Leaders together with many other

global players and partners converged here in Italy under the auspices and kind hospitality of the Italian Government in L'Aquila. The meeting convened by the G8 in L'Aquila today stands out to be a historic watershed where global leaders resonated along the decisions of the Summit of the AU to deal with the Africa-related sector of Global food insecurity issues.

12. I am glad to report that with an uncommon resolve, we have made significant advances in our roadmap towards institutionalising the CAADP framework on the continent. For your information, the ECOWAS member states are almost 75% compliant in convening the Country Roundtables and signing the Country CAADP Compacts. This is the instrument that institutionalises the formal engagement of the national decision making organs down to the grassroots. Other RECs have been lined up to follow suit and we are sustaining this high momentum in collaboration with our strategic partners in development. In this connection, The AUC-NEPAD and the African Development Financing Institutions together with our Development Partners therefore, have a major responsibility to ensure that agriculture effectively plays a lead role in advancing economic growth and alleviating poverty on the continent. We are determined to take advantage of the overt political will and resolve by the African leaders and match it with the appropriate technical and financial support required to ensure that we quickly advance the African agriculture agenda while retaining the grounds that have been gained.
13. Another important mechanism that has been designed to assist the CAADP agenda is the convening of various platforms such as, the CAADP Partnership Platform, which provides space for dialogue towards improving the alignment and effectiveness of the support from African and foreign partners with respect to implementation of CAADP. In this light, the African Union Commission also welcomes recent pronouncements by Development Partners, specifically at the G-8 meeting at L'Aquilla in July 2009 as well as the recent statement by the United States Government, of their resolve to boost support to African agriculture through CAADP.
14. To say that we have a daunting task in containing the African food issue is an understatement. We now have what we describe as 'The Continental Instrument' to stimulate a sustainable agriculture-led growth at the grass root. The commitment to increase public expenditure ration on agriculture to a minimum of 10% is fast gaining grounds and on track. The targeted 6% annual growth rate in the sector will ultimately translate into a much needed green revolution on the continent.
15. Africa is laden with several emerging challenges. Some of these include the global high food prices, compounded by issues of climate change, and the pressure that these place on our continent's development process and the most vulnerable in society. Africa therefore, in collaboration with its partners, needs to urgently work on attaining greater progress towards meeting the objectives of

CAADP, if we are to successfully mitigate the impact of these challenges on the livelihoods of our people.

16. Excellencies, let me briefly hint you on the Decision on Climate Change, issued by the 12th Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union held on 1-4 February 2009 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. By the said Decision, the Heads of State approved that the Algiers Declaration on Climate Change serves as the platform of the Common African Position in the negotiation process for the new global climate change regime for the period 2012 and beyond and that Africa be represented by one delegation which is empowered to negotiate on behalf of all AU Member States at COP 15. There are bigger challenges ahead for Africa's agricultural development agenda. For instance, in a few weeks time, Africa will be presenting its Common Position on Climate Change at Copenhagen. Climate Change as you know, directly affects African agricultural development, food and nutrition security. It is therefore, extremely important for all stakeholders to support Africa's position on this matter at national, regional and continental levels, with the AU Commission providing the necessary back up.
17. The conference of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change is well primed for the talks in Copenhagen coming up next month. Based on the mandates given to the African Union Commission of the African Union has been working with the Bureau of AMCEN, UNEP, UNECA, AfDB and other strategic partners to lead the process of arriving at Africa's common position to ensure that resource flow to Africa for climate change adaptations, particularly in the areas directly related to agriculture and food security, is not reduced but it is made adequate, accessible and sustainable.
18. You may also recall that recently, there were clear political messages at global level with significant implications on the African food security agenda. The CAADP African Partners Meeting was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and a series of Post L'Aquila sessions held in Washington DC, New York (UNGA) and the G-20 forum in Pittsburgh all in September 2009, at which a consensus was reached among the Development Partners to re-align their commitment and support to CAADP at country level and to harmonise the efforts of their African country Missions. The CAADP Partnership Platform held last week in Abuja Nigeria also provided the much needed impetus to sustain the current prime time momentum and the joint decision to put the food security agenda on a strong footing. This is testimony to the efforts that are being made to ensure that development assistance to African agriculture is channelled through well developed and designed CAADP Compact-based national investment programs.
19. We therefore welcome the significant progress since the L'Aquila meeting. We continue to embrace these important partnerships and commitments and are looking forward to a fruitful collaboration with all our development and donor

partners. We expect to report on progress made, some of the lessons learnt, and to share ideas on the way forward for CAADP implementation.

20. We at the African Union Commission are expectant that this progression will be visible, and that this will encourage the AU member States to accelerate their own processes towards attaining food security and poverty eradication.
21. Your Excellencies, let me seize this opportunity to bring to your kind attention an important event scheduled for next year that seeks to boost agri-business in Africa as the next phase of our industrial revolution in the agricultural sector. As a follow-up to the commitments and the subsequent consultative process, in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, UNIDO, FAO and IFAD are organizing the High-Level Conference on the Development of Agribusiness and Agro-Industries in Africa (HLCD-3A), which will take place in Abuja from 8 to 10 March 2010.
22. In anticipation of a successful launch of the CAADP framework, it is imperative that market access and agri-business infrastructure and institutions are in place and mainstreamed into the CAADP initiative. The grounds for the conference stem from the tremendous momentum created for agricultural sector development in Africa in conjunction with the recent political commitments. The objectives of this conference is to bring together African Heads of State, Heads of Government, Ministers and senior policy makers, as well as senior representatives of financial institutions to consider and endorse specific commitments to enhance the role of agribusiness and agro-industries in promoting food security, employment generation and sustainable economic growth in Africa.
23. In conclusion, the African Union Commission supports the ideals of the Committee on Food Security and CAADP is open to the Committee as a continental mechanism for implementation of its decision. The African Union Commission through CAADP further subscribes to the good will and commits itself to the following principles:
 - a. The eradication of hunger from the face of the planet by the year 2025
 - b. Establishment of a permanent mechanism to meet the rising food needs and the requirements of the projected 9.2 billion people by the year 2050

In the light of the foregoing, we hereby request that CAADP be given its due recognition and place in the proposed governance mechanism of the Committee on Food Security.

I thank you for your attention.

