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Regional Workshop for the Review of Draft International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures, Accra, Ghana, 29 August – 02 September 2005

Welcome Address

By

**Oloche Anebi Edache
Assistant Director-General and
FAO Regional Representative for Africa**

Honourable Minister,
Mr. Chairman,
Participants,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen
Gentlemen of the Press,

On behalf of the Director-General of FAO, Dr. Jacques Diouf, I wish to welcome you all to this Regional Workshop on the Draft International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures. The FAO Regional Office for Africa is pleased to host the two regional workshops planned for this year on draft standards of the International Plant Protection Convention. The current workshop is for English-speaking countries, while the one which was held last week, was for French-speaking countries. I am pleased that we can thus continue the fruitful collaboration established by the Regional Office for Africa with plant protection officials in the region. I am delighted that forty-two countries have answered the call for nominations to attend these two workshops, which demonstrates not only the strength of this collaboration but also the relevance of the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures of the International Plant Protection Convention to the needs of Africa as perceived by member countries of the Organization in the Region.

I don't need to stress the importance of the active participation of all countries in the standard-setting activities relating to trade and public health, nor the close relationship between the IPPC and the SPS Agreement of the World Trade Organization. Realistic and objective standards will protect the health of consumers and promote trade, besides controlling the spread of pests. Active participation of all African countries in standard-setting is therefore essential for the region as a whole, and we are delighted to take part actively in international cooperation in this area.

The purpose of this workshop is to discuss and comment on the five draft standards. Comments should be sent individually by countries to the IPPC Secretariat in Rome, to be studied by the Standards Committee in November 2005. The draft standards would then be presented for adoption to the eighth session of the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures in April 2006. I have deliberately used the word "would", because only 5 acceptances of the 1997 amendments of the IPPC are needed before entry into force of the 1997 Convention. Consequences of entry into force will be explained to you during the workshop, but one of them is that the Interim Commission will cease to exist and the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures will take its place with contracting parties as members.

Regarding draft standards, the five drafts under study this year are:

- Diagnostic protocols for regulated pests
- Guidelines for consignments in transit
- Principles for the protection of plant health (revision of ISPM No. 1)
- Requirements for the establishment and maintenance of pest free areas for tephritid fruit flies
- Requirements for the submission of phytosanitary treatments

Two of these draft standards will serve as the basis for setting more specific standards on diagnostic and on phytosanitary treatments. The implementation of specific standards will in turn greatly contribute to preventing the spread of pests and to facilitating trade. There will be the possibility of developing them to a fast-track procedure, which will be presented to you, with the first standard sent for comments in the framework of this procedure. This fast-track procedure will address the concerns of countries in terms of specific standards.

I am glad to know that some of you have already taken part actively in the standard-setting processes of the IPPC. Workshops on draft standards for English-speaking countries of Africa have been held in the past at different locations but this one is the first to be held in the Regional office. I would like to stress the need

for active participation in the discussions, so that precise comments can be transmitted by your countries to the IPPC Secretariat.

I would like to mention further that this meeting is being organized using funds from the IPPC Trust Fund, which is directly dedicated to activities towards developing countries. Several persons will facilitate this meeting, including Ms Fabienne Grousset, from the IPPC Secretariat, Ms Pumeza Skepe and Mr. Gabriel Adejare who are members of the Standards Committee.

I hope that this workshop will be a pleasant learning experience for all participants and that it will enhance the motivation to take part in the standard-setting processes and to cooperate in the regional effort to prevent the spread of pests.

Let me again wish you a successful meeting and a pleasant stay in Accra, while I thank you for granting me audience.