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SPEECH

By

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OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE CECAF SCIENTIFIC SUB-COMMITTEE (24 – 26 OCTOBER 2005) AT THE ERATA HOTEL, ACCRA, GHANA

Honourable Minister of Fisheries, Mrs Gladys Asmah, Chairman CECAF Scientific Sub-Committee
Invited Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a pleasure for me to deliver, in the name of the Director General of FAO, Mr Jacques Diouf, a statement at the opening of the Fourth Session of the Scientific Sub-Committee of the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF), which will review information on the state of the fisheries stocks in the CECAF zone.

Honourable Minister, in personally accepting to preside over this ceremony, you have not only honoured us but given a clear signal of your commitment to closely follow the fisheries development in our Sub-Region and in the high fish consuming country of Ghana. I would like to seize this opportunity to thank you for agreeing to be associated with the holding of this Session in Accra. I would also like to assure you of FAO's resolve to assist you in your admirable efforts to make a difference in the fisheries sector in Ghana.

Mr Chairman, Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, the CECAF Scientific Sub-Committee, which is meeting here for the next three days, will discuss subjects and review the information on the state of the

fisheries stocks in the CECAF coastal area. This area covers the vast expanse of water stretching from Morocco to the Democratic Republic of Congo and has three ecologically significant zones of high and low upwelling, which makes it one of the richest fishing zones around the continent.

The Scientific Sub-Committee of CECAF was established in 1998 at the Fourteenth Session of CECAF and is a subsidiary body of the Committee. It constitutes national experts who analyse fisheries management and development information needed by CECAF member countries to formulate policies that will ensure responsible fisheries.

As most of the fisheries stocks in the region have attained levels that show signs of over-exploitation, there is an urgent need for a concerted effort to limit the commercial exploitation of the fisheries resources in the CECAF region to sustainable levels. This concern has made the Sub-Committee a very important advisory body that gives scientific advice to guide the activities of the different fisheries stakeholders.

Mr Chairman, Honourable Minister,

The advice given can be effectively transformed into positive interventions in the fisheries sector in the respective member countries, which will eventually contribute immensely to maintaining food security with the increasing rise in populations currently being experienced. FAO will continue to support member country food security initiatives that will contribute to sustaining the livelihoods of the people in the Africa region and the CECAF area, in particular.

I await the conclusions and recommendations of your Sub-Committee with keen interest because it will contribute to FAO's effort in helping its member countries make informed decisions on the conservation, management and development of the fisheries resources in the rich fishing grounds of the CECAF zone.

I thank you all for your attention.