

REPORT

Accra,
Ghana,
20-24 July
1992

Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

FAO Member Nations in the Africa Region (as at 24 July 1992)

Algeria	Gambia	Niger
Angola	Ghana	Nigeria
Benin	Guinea	Rwanda
Botswana	Guinea-Bissau	Sao Tome and Principe
Burkina Faso	Kenya	Senegal
Burundi	Lesotho	Seychelles
Cameroon	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Cape Verde	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Sudan
Central African Republic	Madagascar	Swaziland
Chad	Malawi	Tanzania
Comoros	Mali	Togo
Congo	Mauritania	Tunisia
Côte d'Ivoire	Mauritius	Uganda
Equatorial Guinea	Morocco	Zaire
Ethiopia	Mozambique	Zambia
Gabon	Namibia	Zimbabwe

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for Africa

First	— Lagos, Nigeria, 3-12 November 1960
Second	— Tunis, Tunisia, 1-10 November 1962
Third	— Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 3-15 September 1964
Fourth	— Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 9-19 November 1966
Fifth	— Kampala, Uganda, 18-29 November 1968
Sixth	— Algiers, Algeria, 17 September - 3 October 1970
Seventh	— Libreville, Gabon, 14-30 September 1972
Eighth	— Rose Hill, Mauritius, 1-17 August 1974
Ninth	— Freetown, Sierra Leone, 2-12 November 1976
Tenth	— Arusha, Tanzania, 18-28 September 1978
Eleventh	— Lomé, Togo, 16-27 June 1980
Twelfth	— Algiers, Algeria, 22 September - 2 October 1982
Thirteenth	— Harare, Zimbabwe, 16-25 July 1984
Fourteenth	— Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, 2-11 September 1986
Fifteenth	— Moka, Mauritius, 26 April - 4 May 1988
Sixteenth	— Marrakech, Morocco, 11-15 June 1990
Seventeenth	— Accra, Ghana, 20-24 July 1992

**REPORT OF THE
SEVENTEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA**

Accra, Ghana, 20 - 24 July 1992

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
Rome, 1992

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SUMMARY OF THE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Country Statement and General Debate

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference:

1. appealed to all Member Nations who had not yet paid their assessed statutory contributions for the current year, including arrears, to honour their obligations to the Organization (para. 24).
2. appealed for more aid to eastern and southern African countries to mitigate the human suffering through long-term development programmes (para. 27).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference:

3. appealed to the Director-General to assist Member Nations in developing their water resources, especially as regarded the expansion in irrigation to compensate for variations in weather condition (para. 27).
4. appealed to the Director-General of FAO to provide support to Member Nations of the Region in strengthening their institutional capacity regarding Early Warning Systems (para. 27).
5. appealed to the Director-General to assist in the reactivation of OCLALAV (para. 28).
6. requested the Director-General to continue to intensify FAO studies on the contractionary effects of some measures being implemented under SAP, especially as regarded their effects on food security (para. 32).
7. urged FAO to reintroduce the practice of convening the Technical Committee before the Plenary Session while maintaining the total duration of the Conference within one week (para. 33).

Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1990-91

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference:

8. repeated its appeal for assessed contributions to FAO to be paid promptly (para. 38).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference:

9. re-echoed its recommendations during past Regional Conferences for the Regional Office for Africa to be strengthened, provided with

adequate financial resources, and delegated with sufficient authority to promote economic and technical cooperation among African countries especially as regarded common resources shared by several countries, pests and disease control, and such special programmes as the international scheme for the Conservation and Rehabilitation of African Lands (para. 38).

Implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference:

10. acknowledged that the primary responsibility for rural development rested with national governments and appealed to them to formulate a minimum Plan of Action at national, sub-regional and regional levels (para. 44).
11. called upon CIRDAFRICA Member Nations to honour their financial obligations towards the Centre (para. 46).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference:

12. appealed to FAO and the donor community to provide technical and financial support for the formulation and execution of the minimum Plan of Action at the three levels (para. 44).

Sustainable Agriculture and Environment

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference:

13. called for the development of national programmes related to Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) within the context of UNCED's Agenda 21 (para. 54).
14. expressed the need to review national budgets and development plans giving top priority to reform and structural adjustment programmes and those that favoured increased food supply, resource protection and a build-up of rural infrastructure (para. 60).
15. reaffirmed the target of twenty percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to be applied to agriculture (para. 61).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference:

16. requested FAO to consider organizing a regional meeting or series of subregional meetings, on ISCRAL to bring together countries and donors to discuss and agree on support for national programmes for land conservation and rehabilitation (para. 55).

17. welcomed FAO's role in analyzing the impacts of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) on the agricultural sector, in particular as regarded the use of inputs such as fertilizers (para. 56).

Representation of the Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference:

18. elected the Republic of Ghana (Professor Kwesi Affransah Haizel) to represent the Region in the CGIAR from 1993 to 1996 (para. 66).

Update on Preparations for the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN)

For the Attention of Governments and of FAO

The Conference:

19. urged all concerned to make full use of this opportunity to fight hunger, malnutrition and diet-related diseases affecting all countries (para. 68).

Fourth International Technical Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference:

20. recommended, as part of the preparatory process of the Technical Conference, the preparation of both the first report of the State of the World Plant Genetic Resources and the first Global Plan of Action on Plant Genetic Resources (para. 74).
21. recommended that a number of expert and regional meetings be organized, and that advantage should be taken of the FAO Regional Conferences in producing the State of the World Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action (para. 74).

The Accra Declaration on Sound Environment for Sustainable Agriculture in Africa

For the Attention of the Governments and FAO

The Conference:

22. considered the revised draft, and approved the Declaration, the full text of which is attached as Appendix D (para. 77).

Cooperation Between FAO and the OAU Secretariat

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference:

23. recommended that various activities undertaken jointly by OAU and FAO be strengthened, especially in areas of nutrition and food and agriculture (para. 78).
24. expressed the wish that the two organizations revise and update the existing Cooperation Agreement between them signed in 1967 (para. 79).

Date and Place of the Eighteenth Regional Conference for Africa

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference:

25. noted the offer of Burundi to host the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa, and requested the Director-General to decide on the date and place of the Conference in consultation with Member Governments (para. 80).

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

Organization of the Conference

1. The Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa was held at the Accra International Conference Centre, the Republic of Ghana, from 20 to 24 July 1992, under the theme "Sound Environment for Sustainable Agriculture in Africa."
2. The Conference was attended by 167 delegates from 35 Member Nations of the Region, 28 of which were represented at ministerial level; nine observers from Member Nations outside the Region, representatives of the United Nations Specialized Agencies including Mrs Catherine Bertini, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), and 12 observers from intergovernmental organizations and representatives of national liberation movements recognized by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). A list of participants is given as Appendix B of the Report; while Appendix C contains a list of Conference documents.
3. The Independent Chairman of the FAO Council, Mr Antoine Saintraint, attended the Conference.

Inaugural Ceremony

4. The Director-General of FAO, Mr Edouard Saouma, welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. He paid a special tribute to the Chairman of the Provisional National Defence Council and Head of State of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings under whose wise leadership Ghana's economy had made remarkable progress in overcoming the structural imbalances that were major obstacles to the economic and social development of the people. He observed that the food and agricultural sector had been accorded high priority in Ghana, and that the sector response to policy measures had been impressive, with cocoa production doubling in less than a decade.
5. The high-level representation at the Conference, the Director-General observed, was a manifestation of the keen interest of Member Nations in the items on the agenda. He paid tribute to the Ghanaian authorities for all the courtesies and warm hospitality extended to the delegates and for the excellent facilities provided.
6. The Chairman of the PNDC, Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings extended a hearty and warm welcome to the delegates. In his inaugural address, he regretted the continued pain, indignity and dehumanizing effects of recurrent food shortages in the Africa Region. Referring to the issues to be considered by the Conference, the Head of State acknowledged the relevance of the agenda to Ghana's agricultural situation.
7. He informed the Conference that approximately seventy percent of Ghanaians were engaged in agriculture. Since they were illiterate, however, they could not take full advantage of the Conference deliberations and recommendations. He expressed the hope that ways would be found to bring the rich knowledge of the Conference within the reach of small-scale farmers, whose labours continued to ensure the nation's survival.

8. The Chairman observed that since the Conference was taking place after the recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the theme chosen for the Conference, "Sound Environment for Sustainable Agriculture in Africa", was pertinent. He invited delegates to prescribe simple solutions that addressed the basic issues and not just the symptoms.

9. He regretted that the hopes generated by the "Earth Summit" had been frustrated by its failure to address the problem of reconciling environmental preservation with the legitimate concerns of poor countries. He underscored that future generations should not be deprived of the opportunity to enjoy their lives on an earth capable of sustaining and enhancing their well-being. He referred to the menaces created by soil erosion, desertification, deforestation, declining rainfall, bushfires, crop failure, over-grazing, hunger and malnutrition which hampered man's legitimate pursuit of a normal means of livelihood.

10. The Chairman, in conclusion, regretted the perpetuation of unfair international economic relations. He appealed for rational exploitation of resources that would preserve the environment. He further appealed for substantial amounts of resources to support research endeavours, and for the implementation of appropriate development policies, strategies and programmes that would best transform African traditional agriculture into a modern system incorporating improved technological packages for sustainable agriculture without degrading the environment. The full statement is given in Appendix E.

Election of Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur

11. At its first working session, the Conference elected, by acclamation, Mr Ibrahim Adam, Acting PNDC Secretary for Agriculture of the Republic of Ghana, as its Chairman. In a short acceptance speech, the Minister expressed his appreciation to the delegates for the honour bestowed upon his country in presiding over the Conference. He stated that the Conference was being held at a very important moment for the African Region since it had followed the "Earth Summit" held in Rio de Janeiro. He appealed to delegates for their cooperation in discharging the responsibilities conferred on him.

12. The Conference then elected, by acclamation, the Honourable Louis Nduwimana, Minister of Development, Tourism and Environment of the Republic of Burundi, and the Honourable Themba N. Masuku, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Swaziland as its First and Second Vice-Chairmen, respectively. Mr Assefa Yilala, Alternate Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to FAO, was elected Rapporteur.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

13. The Conference considered and adopted its agenda, as reproduced in Appendix A to this Report.

Statement by the Director-General of FAO

14. In his keynote address, Mr Edouard Saouma, the Director-General of FAO, praised the pioneering leadership role played by Ghana, since its independence, in promoting the notion of African nationalism leading to the attainment of political independence in many African countries. He recalled

that it was in Ghana that Pan Africanism and the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) had been promoted. It was with similar sentiment that the meeting which led to the establishment of the FAO Regional Office for Africa had been held in Accra some 30 years ago.

15. The Director-General recalled that since the last Regional Conference in 1990, several measures had been adopted. The move towards democracy, the changing political situation in South Africa, the willingness of certain major creditor nations to alleviate or even to cancel the debts of several African countries raised expectations for rapid economic and social progress. He commended both the World Bank and the African Development Bank that had also increased their allocation of resources for African development projects and were assisting many countries in managing their economies. He stated that FAO was pleased to associate itself with these endeavours by making effective contributions in their achievements. In particular, FAO had supported measures to conserve and to rehabilitate African lands, to develop technical cooperation among developing countries, and to strengthen regional cooperation and integration efforts.

16. The Director-General regretted that the expectations for rapid economic and social development had been frustrated. He observed that Africa had been facing devastating challenges, in particular, as related to high population growth, environmental degradation, the unfavourable economic climate, and adverse human activity. The consequences of these unmet challenges had resulted in widespread social dislocation, and were unfortunately leading to social conflicts. Emigration had reached alarming proportions; while African economies as a whole continued to depend exclusively on raw materials to enhance their development and pay for their imports. He stated that while exports in volume terms grew by four percent a year, export earnings declined by six percent annually due to declining export prices. There were no immediate prospects for improvement in the effort international terms of trade. Governments did not have the means to manage their surpluses or to subsidize agriculture. Likewise, African farmers continued to receive inadequate assistance and could raise their incomes only by producing more by utilizing methods that, in the absence of inputs, gradually undermined the resource base. He said aid was obviously not a viable solution, and only served as a derisory palliative.

17. Referring to Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) currently being implemented in many African countries with the support of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Director-General doubted their effectiveness because of conflicting aims to reduce expenditures and contain demand on the one hand, while increasing output supply and effort earnings on the other. However, weak economies and national poverty levels had prevented a reversal of the course of events, and the adverse impact on vulnerable population groups had been particularly devastating, especially in undermining food security. International aid had mitigated the consequences of this situation, but the level of overall assistance had been modest. The Director-General also cautioned against wars, tensions and destabilizing domestic conflicts as destructive human actions that threatened the fate and future of Africans.

18. The Director-General observed that Africa, nevertheless, had its winning cards: the countless small-scale farmers and its natural resources. A prerequisite for success, however, was the political commitment to

achieve sustained growth in the agriculture and food production sectors through incentives, inputs, institutions and infrastructures.

19. In conclusion, the Director-General appealed to the international community to recognize Africa's importance to the world and to assist the continent in overcoming its economic depression. FAO was proud to feature among the most fervent defenders of African interests and he requested that care, flexibility and delicacy be used in understanding the African situation. The full text of the Director-General's statement is attached as Appendix E.

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in Africa

20. Country statements were presented by Delegates from the following 23 countries (in order of presentation): Ethiopia, Mauritius, Togo, Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Malawi, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Senegal, Mali, Botswana, Niger, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Ghana, Namibia, Benin, Angola, Morocco, Congo and Mauritania. The country statements of the delegation of the Republic of Cape Verde and Algeria were filed with the Regional Conference. The Conference also listened to statements by observers from the Organization of African Unity, the African National Congress and by the representative of the United Nations.

21. Mrs Catherine Bertini, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), briefed the Conference on the activities of the WFP most of which contributed to the protection of the environment and increased food and agricultural production in Africa in addition to providing emergency food relief. The Executive Director informed the Conference that Africa received about forty percent of WFP resources.

22. In his brief address, the Independent Chairman of the FAO Council, Mr Antoine Saintraint, recalled the role and functions of FAO. He underlined the interdependence of countries and the fundamental need for cooperation and coordination among UN institutions and other development agencies to reinforce efficiency in project implementation.

23. The Conference expressed appreciation for Africa's large share in the FAO budgetary allocation and paid tribute to the Director-General for his untiring efforts in bringing the critical economic situation in the Region to the attention of the international community. It was recalled that FAO, at both local and national levels, carried out intensive programmes over a wide range of activities in the fields of agriculture, and in the fishery and forestry sectors, including support for institution building inasmuch as resources permitted. The Conference appreciated that environmental concerns had recently become a major focus of the Organization's programme in Africa. It also appreciated the promotion of technical cooperation among African countries, as well as the establishment of technical cooperation networks.

24. The Conference regretted that the implementation of the Organization's programme of work was being hamstrung by budgetary shortfalls and instability. The Conference, therefore, appealed to all Member Nations who had not yet paid their assessed statutory contributions for the current year, including arrears, to honour their obligations to the Organization. In particular, it recalled the compelling need for Member Nations in arrears to meet their obligations so that the Programme of Work and Budget approved by the Twenty-sixth Session of the Conference of FAO in 1991 could be fully implemented.

25. Delegations reported on their countries' ongoing policies, programmes and strategies aimed at improving overall agricultural and socio-economic development. The efforts made involved management of natural resources and the disengagement of the state from some major economic activities in favour of the private sector. Delegations also reported on

their active preparations for the forthcoming International Conference on Nutrition (ICN) to be held in Rome in early December 1992. The importance of the Conference in addressing nutritional and diet-related problems, especially among the poor and other vulnerable groups, was stressed.

26. The Conference indicated that the problem of environmental degradation was crucial since past development initiatives, especially food production and related activities, had failed to address the issue firmly. The Conference acknowledged that as the natural resource base was the principal source of productive activities, the increasing degradation of arable and rangelands in many parts of Africa was posing a very serious ecological threat.

27. Delegations reported on a variety of environmental deteriorations in their countries. Delegates from Eastern and Southern Africa reported that the sub-region was suffering from the severest drought in living memory. The drought had had devastating consequences for both human, livestock and wildlife population primarily due to acute shortfalls in food production and there had been widespread hunger, malnutrition, outright famine and abject poverty. The sub-region which used to enjoy a reasonable self-sufficiency in food supply was relying on emergency food aid. The Conference appreciated relief and other forms of assistance being provided by the international community and appealed for more aid to mitigate the human suffering through long-term development programmes. It expressed appreciation for FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) which had been instrumental in alerting the international community to the plight of the sub-region. The Conference appealed to the Director-General to assist Member Nations in developing their water resources, especially as regarded the expansion in irrigation to compensate for variations in weather conditions. The Conference also appealed to the Director-General of FAO to provide support to Member Nations of the Region in strengthening their institutional capacity regarding Early Warning Programmes.

28. The Sahel sub-region which had been afflicted by recurrent drought in the 1970's and 1980's, generally enjoyed relatively good weather conditions, and sporadic drought was only experienced in a few areas. However, delegations from the sub-region expressed concern with the resurgence of insect pests, especially locusts. The Conference, therefore, appealed to the Director-General to assist in the reactivation of OCLALAV. Despite some of these environmental problems, one Member Nation in the sub-region reported a bumper harvest of millet in 1991 and was able to export the cereal.

29. The Conference expressed concern with the adverse weather conditions in the eastern, southern and the Sahel sub-regions, and with deforestation in the forest-belt. Concern was expressed by several delegations about the combined effects of environmental stress which, apart from degrading the resource base, was encouraging a large-scale drift of young people from rural to urban centres to escape increasing rural poverty.

30. Many delegations also referred to the dual effects of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) which many countries were implementing with the support of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. While monetary, fiscal, trade and exchange rate policies being implemented under SAP had improved the incentives, eliminated distortions in the economies and had potential beneficial effects on the performance of the agricultural sector, the benefits had been outweighed by the economic and social costs

of adjustment. Delegations recalled that protection of the environment, for instance, would require the adoption of improved technological packages using technical and productive inputs such as organic and mineral fertilizers, insecticide and improved seeds. The Conference regretted that as the sharp increase in the imported input prices had not been matched by a corresponding increase in output prices, there had been a steep decline in relative profitability of input use. The Conference therefore regretted that the removal of fiscal incentives (subsidies) from these input prices, and budgetary reduction would have deleterious effects on the performance of the agricultural sector.

31. The Conference noted that the use of these inputs required a well-organized system of financial intermediation in rural areas with sufficient resources (agricultural credit). However, the Conference regretted that the prohibitively high interest rates had increased the cost of borrowing beyond the means of small-scale farmers.

32. The Conference, therefore, requested the Director-General to continue to intensify FAO studies on the contractionary effects of some measures being implemented under SAP, especially as regarded their effects on food security. Furthermore, many delegations requested the FAO to assist Member Nations of the Region in formulating their agricultural policies under SAP framework.

33. Commenting on the organization of the Regional Conference, the Conference urged FAO to reintroduce the practice of convening the Technical Committee before the Plenary Session to permit in-depth analysis of issues before the Conference. The Conference felt that the two meetings could still be held within a week - devoting three days to the Technical Committee proceedings and two to the Plenary Session.

Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1990-91

34. The Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa introduced this Agenda item.¹ He briefly described the adverse political and economic situation under which the agricultural sector's performance had to be evaluated in the Region.

35. He stressed that despite some improvements during the biennium, the food and agriculture situation in the Region continued to face such serious problems as environmental degradation, deforestation and unfavourable climatic conditions. Therefore, the Region's food self-sufficiency rate did not register appreciable and durable improvement.

36. FAO continued to give high priority to the Region's agricultural and rural development, allocating more than half of its limited resources to Africa. Although the Organization's capacity to respond to the needs of the African farmer was further eroded during the biennium by persistent financial constraints, FAO had endeavoured to support Member Governments' efforts in such priority areas as management and conservation of land and water resources, policy analysis and advice in key sectors, strengthening of agricultural research capacity at national and regional levels, promotion of rural development including the enhancement of women's role in rural activities, assessment of the nutritional impact of agricultural policies

¹ ARC/92/2

and improvement of the nutritional status of the rural population. Forestry had also received attention, in particular afforestation for fuelwood and multi-purpose management of vegetation cover in dryland areas. In fisheries, action had been taken according to the strategy adopted by the World Fisheries Conference, and fish consumption in human nutrition was promoted.

37. The Regional Representative then summarized FAO activities in the Region during the biennium under the Regular Programme, Field Programme and Special Action Programmes. He emphasized that cooperation between FAO and the regional and sub-regional inter-governmental organizations, as well as with non-governmental organizations, had been strengthened during the past biennium and he made particular reference to efforts in promoting technical and economic cooperation among developing countries.

38. The Conference expressed appreciation for the wide range of programmes being implemented in the Region, but regretted that continued financial shortfalls and instability were hampering the expansion of urgently-needed programmes. It repeated its appeal for assessed contributions to FAO to be paid promptly. The Conference re-echoed its recommendations made during past Regional Conferences for the Regional Office for Africa to be strengthened, provided with adequate financial resources, and delegated with sufficient authority to promote economic and technical cooperation among African countries especially as regarded common resources shared by several countries, pests and disease control, and such special programmes as the International Scheme for the Conservation and Rehabilitation of African Lands.

FAO Medium-Term Plan 1994-99: Regional Dimensions

39. The Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa also introduced this item.² He recalled the severe problems faced by the Africa Region in meeting its economic and social development objectives. He emphasized the daunting challenges which the agricultural scene throughout the Region was facing, especially as regarded soil fertility depletion, erratic rainfall and recurrent drought, under-developed irrigation potentials, poor animal husbandry practices, and low priority and inadequate resource allocations to the fisheries sector. Desertification in semi-arid and sub-humid lands and the destruction of tropical forests also remained two major problems facing the Region.

40. Rural areas were still beset by problems of unemployment, inadequate education, poor social services and nutritional status. Policy formulation and planning in all the sectors were hampered by the general lack of reliable data, inadequate knowledge of traditional farming systems and insufficient manpower training. In concluding his introduction, the Regional Representative informed the Conference that the Medium-Term Plan's main focus would be to support the efforts of African Member Nations in addressing these issues globally through environmental and resource management activities that promoted sustainable development objectives. In this connection research capacities would be upgraded to meet the needs of small-scale farmers while reconciling conservation and rehabilitation goals. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), regional and sub-regional

² ARC/92/2-Sup.1

economic groupings and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) would continue to be major partners in this endeavour.

Implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

41. In presenting this agenda item³, the Senior Officer (Production Systems) traced the history of WCARRD whose origins dated back to the pervasive and persistent deterioration in the conditions of life of rural population throughout the developing world since the 1960s. Since then, Africa had emerged as the continent with the worst symptoms of economic crisis, characterized by severe food deficits, and weak and deficient agrarian structures and policies. He enumerated the tasks assigned to Governments and International Agencies in the implementation of the Declaration of Principle and Programme of Action. The implementation of WCARRD could have achieved sustained growth and development only if material progress had been associated with social justice and the deliberate involvement of the poorer segment of the rural populations.

42. He summarized progress achieved at the national level by FAO and other United Nations Agencies in the implementation of the Plan of Action. The weaknesses discovered were summarized as: (a) the absence at the national level of a WCARRD strategy that would facilitate the implementation of a Government programme to achieve set objectives; (b) priority given to economic policy reforms under structural adjustment programmes that overshadowed and detracted official attention from WCARRD principles and that relegated it to the level of peripheral interest by some Governments; (c) awareness of WCARRD and the Peasant's Charter confined to a limited number of government officials, while coupled with minimal awareness by still fewer of the most active NGO's.

43. He invited the Conference to consider the need to decide on the adoption of a Minimum Action Plan to be executed over the next four years at sub-regional and regional levels. He concluded by reconfirming FAO's commitment and resolve to mobilize its technical competence in support of African Governments and its endeavour to achieve the objectives set out in the Peasant's Charter.

44. The Conference expressed grave concern about the intensification of rural poverty, a situation which had been contrary to the expectations of WCARRD. It re-affirmed its commitment to the noble ideals and aspirations of the Peasant's Charter which were still regarded as valid and relevant. The Conference acknowledged that the primary responsibility for rural development rested with national governments and, therefore, it appealed to them to formulate a Minimum Plan of Action at national, sub-regional and regional levels. However, the Conference admitted that the challenge of reversing the deepening trend in rural poverty by unaided Member Nations would be a daunting task, given the enormity of the combined effects of internal pressures (population, environmental stress, adverse domestic terms of trade, natural and man-made calamities), and recession-related external constraints. The Conference, therefore, appealed to FAO and the donor community to provide technical and financial support for the formulation and execution of the Minimum Plan of Action at the three levels.

³ ARC/92/3

45. The Conference commended FAO for the establishment of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Africa (CIRDAFRICA), as well as the efforts made by some countries in the Region to participate in its activities. The importance of the Centre's contribution to rural development, especially the possibilities it offered in the areas of training, research and exchange between African rural development specialists, was stressed.

46. The Conference expressed concern over the difficult financial situation of CIRDAFRICA and regretted that only 17 countries had joined the institution to date. Improvement in the membership was indispensable for the success of CIRDAFRICA's activities because more avenues could be opened for technical cooperation among countries of the Region. The Conference endorsed these conclusions, and called upon CIRDAFRICA Member Nations to honour their financial obligations towards the Centre. Additional FAO Member Nations in the Region were encouraged to join the Centre in order to strengthen its contribution towards rural development in Africa.

Sustainable Agriculture and Environment

47. The Assistant Director-General for the Agriculture Department apprised the conference on the outcome of the United Nation's Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 3 to 14 June 1992, and its implications for agriculture, economic and social policy, as well as forestry and fisheries development in the Region. The Rio Declaration, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Climate Change, and the non-legally-binding principles on forests were among the visible results of UNCED.

48. He informed the Conference that Agenda 21 of the UNCED contained significant implications for future programme and policy priorities for agencies such as FAO, and especially for countries in the Region. In addition to the specific chapter on sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD), chapters on combatting deforestation, freshwater resources and oceans and marine resources components related to bio-diversity, education, land use planning, mountain ecosystems, technology transfer, toxic chemicals; at least 72 of the 115 programme areas were related to FAO. The Organization was seen to be well positioned to assist countries to implement Agenda 21, but more progress was necessary with regard to financing.

49. Referring to the International Cooperative Programme Framework (ICPF/SARD) endorsed by the Twenty-sixth Session of the FAO Conference in 1991 and embodied in the Agenda 21 with its cross-sectoral character, he informed the Conference that it was considered a rational approach to the implementation of national policies and programmes for sustainable agriculture and protection of the environment in the Region. Follow-up activities were suggested for consideration by the Member Nations that would demonstrate their commitment to sustainable development and environment. The UNCED decision to initiate negotiations for an International Framework Convention on Desertification Control was particularly relevant to the African countries.

50. The Regional Soil Resources Officer presented the Agenda item on Sustainable Agriculture and Environment.⁴ He reminded the Conference that

⁴ ARC/92/4

the concept of sustainability included environmental, social, economic and technological aspects. The challenges facing Africa in meeting the goals of SARD were rapid population growth, unfavourable terms of trade, technological and infrastructural gaps, debt-overhang and natural calamities. Because of Africa's largely rural structure, environmental and sustainability problems were significant in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors.

51. He recalled that natural resources for agriculture in Africa were extensive but fragile and unevenly distributed, thus creating problems in many areas due to population pressure and natural calamities. There had been advanced land degradation in some areas, especially the rangelands.

52. The way to put Africa's agricultural development onto sustainable dimensions was effective implementation of programmes at national, regional and international levels by reviewing and reforming policies to reflect sustainability criteria; building technical and institutional capacity at all levels; transferring and adopting technologies to increase food production; and improving productivity in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors with a minimal detrimental effect on the natural resource base. The Conference welcomed the comprehensive introduction of the document⁵ which reviewed the results of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, including Agenda 21 of UNCED, and affirmed the importance of proper management of Africa's considerable natural resources which could feed present populations on the continent only through sustainable and efficient use and management.

53. The Conference endorsed the recommendation that emphasis be placed on assessment and monitoring of land, water and biological resources, and on strengthening environmental planning and impact assessment capacity in, for example, the ministries responsible for agricultural and land management and development.

54. The Conference called for the development of national programmes related to Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) within the context of UNCED's Agenda 21. The International Cooperative Programme Framework for SARD, endorsed at the last FAO Conference, should take into account existing FAO programmes, as well as such initiatives as the National Environmental Action Plans, National Conservation Strategies and National Reports prepared for UNCED in developing national programmes. These integrated agriculture, forestry and fisheries programmes should be among the countries' priorities in their development assistance programmes. Collaboration with international organizations such as UNDP, UNEP, IFAD and the World Bank was also essential.

55. The Conference endorsed the International Scheme on the Conservation and Rehabilitation of African Lands (ISCRAL), launched at the Sixteenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa which represented a linchpin for follow-up in the Region to Agenda 21. Aspects related to fertility management, including identification and better use of all sources of plant nutrients and control of quantities lost through crop production and land degradation such as erosion, were emphasized. The Conference requested FAO to consider organizing a regional meeting, or series of sub-regional meetings, on ISCRAL to bring together countries and donors to discuss and agree on support for national programmes for land conservation and rehabilitation.

⁵ ARC/92/4

56. The Conference commended FAO's involvement in discussions related to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the difficulties faced by many countries in the Region in entering and competing in international agricultural markets. The Conference welcomed FAO's role in analyzing the impacts of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) on the agricultural sector, in particular with regard to the use of such inputs as fertilizers since their use was already limited by constraints in marketing, distribution and price escalations. The meeting on the impact of SAPs on agriculture, planned for December 1992 in Accra, would undoubtedly provide a useful contribution to this effect.

57. The Conference recalled the very low levels of input use in the Region, especially among smallholder producers of food crops. For the Africa Region, increased inputs, within the context of integrated pest management, integrated plant nutrition programmes, and irrigation and efficient use of water resources, was essential and fully consistent with the objective of sustainable agriculture and rural development. The main considerations in using more external and internal inputs were social acceptability, environmental soundness, and economic viability.

58. The Conference reiterated the priority placed on FAO activities related to women and youth, extension and education, transfer of technology, credit and finance, food loss prevention, marketing and processing, sustainable management of fishery and forest resources, as well as the conservation and use of biological diversity. These activities represented, inter alia, important components of sustainable agriculture and environment in the Africa Region.

59. The Conference regretted the difficult financial circumstances which had persisted in FAO for some years and had prevented the Organization from fully implementing its priority programmes for the Africa Region. They called for all Member Nations to fulfill their financial obligations to the Organization in order that present and future challenges, such as those posed through sustainable agriculture and rural development and the implementation of Agenda 21, could be met.

60. The Conference expressed the need to review national budgets and development plans that gave top priority to reform and structural adjustment programmes and those that favoured increased food supply, resource protection, and build-up of rural infrastructure. Moreover, innovative schemes were needed to relieve the financial burden constraining African countries in their ability to increase investment in agriculture.

61. Regretting the considerable food aid needs of the Region due to the present drought and famine in eastern and southern Africa, the lack of growth in agricultural productivity, and the continuing low priority given to agriculture as compared to other sectors, the Conference noted that the solution to this dilemma was to enhance rural development. This required implementation of measures to increase productivity, diversification of production within and outside agriculture, and increased processing and marketing techniques, coupled with storage facilities that would encourage higher and more stable incomes. These measures would then reinforce the investment levels necessary, technical changes and increased supply of agricultural products. The Conference reaffirmed the target of twenty percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to be applied to investment in agriculture. These challenges could be met primarily, however, through commitment from the countries themselves.

OTHER MATTERS

Representation of the Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

62. In introducing the item⁶, the Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa recalled that the Consultative Group had been established in 1971 as an international consortium sponsored by the World Bank and UNDP. Its mission was to help increase food crop productivity in developing countries, in addition to providing a range of other benefits related to forestry, fisheries and the improvement of the nutritional standards and well-being of people, especially the low-income groups. As an umbrella institution, it supported and guided existing institutes to deal with the pressing development needs of Third World agriculture.

63. The Regional Representative for Africa explained that following recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee, the orientation and priorities of CGIAR had been reviewed in 1989. The main objectives had been to respond to changing human needs by extending among others, research priorities to tropical forestry, and accepting non-associate centres in responding to these challenges.

64. The Conference was informed of the criteria for the selection of the Region's representative to the CGIAR, and the responsibilities entrusted to this office by the Regional Conferences. Criteria for the selection of a representative were indicated as being a demonstrated experience in agricultural research, willingness and dedication to actively participate in the CGIAR meetings and to apprise the CGIAR of the Region's research needs and priorities by reporting regularly to Member Nations on the CGIAR activities.

65. The Conference expressed its satisfaction with the excellent work done by Mauritius over the past two years in representing the Region on the CGIAR. The Conference emphasized that agricultural research was vital in view of the need to meet food production targets by using new technological practices, and to protect the environment. It noted that efforts should be made to make relevant research findings available to the farmers.

66. The Conference then considered regional representation on CGIAR, and unanimously elected Prof. Kwesi Affransah Haizel to represent the Region for the period 1993-1996.

Update on Preparations for the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN)

67. The Conference was provided with an update of the preparation for the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN)⁷ by the Director of the Food Policy and Nutrition Division. He stated that the ICN was being held to provide a global opportunity to critically assess the continuing problems of malnutrition and how they could most effectively be addressed. FAO and WHO would jointly convene the ICN from 5-11 December 1992 in Rome. A Preparatory Committee meeting would be held from 18-24 August in Geneva to

⁶ ARC/92/5

⁷ ARC/92/INF/4

agree upon the draft Declaration and Plan of Action to be submitted to the ICN.

68. The Conference appreciated the efforts to encourage the active participation of Member Nations in all phases of the ICN, including its preparation, the ICN itself, and its follow-up, and urged all concerned to make full use of this opportunity to fight hunger, malnutrition and diet-related diseases that affected all countries. It noted with satisfaction that many countries had prepared country papers summarizing each country's nutrition situation, including the extent and causes of nutrition problems, past experience in addressing them and plans for future action. It commended FAO and WHO on the joint efforts to coordinate the ICN and noted the important inputs for the ICN Declaration and Plan of Action stemming from the Regional meetings.

69. The Conference noted that the ICN would be linked to country and regional-specific activities through regional and sub-regional inter-governmental meetings. Governments of the continent of Africa had been invited to attend one of the three sub-regional meetings held in Nairobi, Dakar and Cairo in March and April, and the Conference noted that a combined report of the Dakar and Nairobi meetings had also been prepared. The Conference stressed the importance of strengthening the food and agriculture base in most countries in order to improve nutritional well-being.

70. The Conference was informed that the NGO community also played a particularly important role in ensuring the nutritional well-being of people, and encouraged their continued involvement in the follow-up activities of the ICN.

71. The Conference emphasized that ICN should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather as an important step in the continuing process to strengthen the commitment and actions necessary in preventing and alleviating hunger and malnutrition.

Fourth International Technical Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources

72. In introducing the item⁸, the Assistant Director-General, Agriculture Department informed the Conference that since 1983, FAO had been developing a Global System on Plant Genetic Resources that covered both agriculture and forestry and that coordinated activities that promoted the safe conservation, sustainable use and unrestricted availability of genetic diversity.

73. The Twenty-sixth Session of the FAO Conference, in November 1991 adopted a Resolution calling on FAO to convene the Fourth International Technical Conference for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources, through extra-budgetary funds and in cooperation with other relevant organizations, in particular the IBPGR and other CGIAR centres.

74. The Conference recommended, as part of the preparatory process of the Technical Conference, the preparation of both the first report of the State of the World Plant Genetic Resources and the first Global Plan of Action on Plant Genetic Resources. It further recommended that a number of

⁸ ARC/92/INF/7

expert and regional meetings be organized, and that advantage should be taken of the FAO Regional Conferences in producing the State of the World Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action.

75. The Global Plan of Action would include specific programmes and projects to be implemented by local, national, regional, international bodies and NGOs. It would aim at rationalizing and coordinating efforts in conservation and utilization of Plant Genetic Resources.

76. The Conference was informed that the Technical Conference was scheduled to be held in 1995. It would address, among other points, the decisions of UNCED and its Agenda 21 proposals. It would also examine and review the State of the World Report and the Global Plan of Action on Plant Genetic Resources, and make technical recommendations regarding proposed activities and their priorities for funding and coordination.

The Accra Declaration on Sound Environment for Sustainable Agriculture in Africa

77. Based on a proposal submitted by the Delegation of Gambia, and after incorporating the various amendments made by other delegations, the Conference approved the "Accra Declaration on Sound Environment for Sustainable Agriculture in Africa", the full text of which can be found in Appendix D to this report.

Cooperation Between FAO and the OAU Secretariat

78. The Conference expressed satisfaction with the various activities undertaken jointly by OAU and FAO. It recommended that these efforts be strengthened, especially in the areas of (i) nutrition and (ii) food and agriculture.

79. The Conference expressed the wish that the two organizations revise and update the existing Cooperation Agreement between the two institutions signed in 1967.

Date and Place of the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa

80. The Delegation of Burundi offered to host the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa. The Conference took note of this offer which would be conveyed to the Director-General of FAO, who would decide on the date and place of the Conference in consultation with Member Governments.

Adoption of the Report

81. The Conference considered and, after some minor amendments, adopted its report by acclamation.

Closure of the Conference

82. In a brief statement on behalf of the Director-General and on his own behalf, the Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa commended the delegates for their active participation at the Conference - a sign of their support for FAO's role in agricultural development. He paid tribute to the Ghanaian authorities for the efforts extended in making the Conference a success. He reiterated his thanks to the Chairman of the PNDC, Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, for the

realistic statement he made at the opening session and which had remained a source of inspiration throughout the deliberations of the Conference. The Regional Representative observed with satisfaction that the Conference focus was on the major problems threatening sustained development of African agriculture. In conclusion, he recalled with appreciation the emphasis laid by the Conference on regional cooperation and integration, the only viable option for realizing the objectives for sustainable development, and he reaffirmed FAO continued support to African countries in order to meet this goal.

83. On behalf of all delegates, the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Water and Rural Development of Namibia, Honourable Mr Kaire Mbuende, moved a vote of thanks to His Excellency Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, Chairman of the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) and Head of State of the Republic of Ghana. He thanked the Conference staff and all the observers to the meeting who had found the time to come and enrich the deliberations, and in particular the delegate from the United States of America for conveying his country's pledge to pay its arrears to the Organization.

84. In his closing address, the Acting PNDC Secretary for Agriculture and Chairman of the Conference, Mr Ibrahim Adam reiterated some of the major issues of the Conference and agenda for the future and appealed in particular for a change of attitude towards the environment since its destruction would also mean the demise of people throughout the world. Mr Adam referred to the recent demographic trends characterized by high population growth. He regretted that population growth had not been counterbalanced by adequate food production and had consequently led to increased environmental degradation. He appealed for adequate attention to be paid to all aspects of agriculture, especially as regarded access of agricultural products to domestic and external markets. He underscored the pivotal role of women in this endeavour, the social implications of their efforts, and the need for adaptive research. He finally invited all countries to give meaning to the Accra Declaration on "Sound Environment for Sustainable Agriculture in Africa" since it provided a basic framework for action in the future.

APPENDIX A

AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Inaugural Ceremony
2. Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Appointment of the Rapporteur
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

II. STATEMENTS

4. Statement by the Director-General
5. Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in the Region
6. Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1990-91

III. SELECTED ISSUES OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

7. Implementation of the Programme of Action of the WCARRD
8. Sustainable Agriculture and Environment
9. Representation of the Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)
10. Update on ICN Preparations

IV. CONCLUDING ITEMS

11. Any other Business
12. Date and Place of the Eighteenth Regional Conference for Africa
13. Adoption of the Conference Report
14. Closure of the Conference

APPENDIX B
ANNEXE B

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

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Chairman Président	: Ibrahim ADAM (Ghana)
Vice-Chairmen Vice-Présidents	: Louis NDUWIMANA (Burundi) : Themba N. MASUKA (Swaziland)
Rapporteur	: Assefa YILALA (Ethiopia)
Independent Chairman of the Council Président indépendant du Conseil	: Antoine SAINTRAINT

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APPENDIX C

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

ARC/92/1	Provisional Annotated Agenda
ARC/92/2	Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1990-91
ARC/92/2-Sup.1	FAO Medium-Term Plan 1994-99 - Regional Dimensions
ARC/92/3	Implementation of the Programme of Action of the WCARRD
ARC/92/4	Sustainable Agriculture and Environment
ARC/92/5	Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

INF Series

ARC/92/INF/1	Information Note
ARC/92/INF/2	Provisional Timetable
ARC/92/INF/3	Provisional List of Documents
ARC/92/INF/4	Preparation for the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN) - Progress Report
ARC/92/INF/5	Action Taken on the Main Recommendations of the Sixteenth Regional Conference
ARC/92/INF/6	Director-General's Statement
ARC/92/INF/7	Fourth International Technical Conference for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources

APPENDIX D

ACCRA DECLARATION ON A SOUND ENVIRONMENT
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

We, African Ministers of Agriculture, Rural Development and Natural Resources, gathered in Accra, Republic of Ghana, from 20 to 24 July 1992 for the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa,

- conscious of the responsibility vested in us by our Heads of State and our peoples to ensure sufficient agricultural, forestry and fishery production to meet the needs of our ever-growing populations, without compromising the production capacity of the resource base;
- considering the specific situation of the African continent where people are overexploiting and degrading two vital natural resources - the soil and plant cover - while other available natural resources remain under - or poorly-exploited - water, energy, certain minerals, animal and human resources;
- endorsing the conclusions and recommendations of the Harare Declaration on the food crisis in Africa; of the study "African Agriculture, the Next 25 Years"; of the FAO/Netherlands Conference on Sustainable Agriculture and the Environment; and Development recently held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil);
- convinced that the sustainable development of agriculture needs to be viewed from a holistic perspective that integrates economic, ecological and social approaches and takes into account gender-based roles;
- convinced of the effectiveness of FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) and of coordinated actions and contributions, as in the case of the eradication of the New World Screwworm in Africa;
- recognizing the contribution already made by FAO and by the international community and international organizations, particularly through special programmes for Africa;
- concerned about the worsening food and nutrition situation, further aggravated by natural disasters (drought, desertification and pest infestation), the external debt burden, unfavourable terms of trade and unrelenting population growth;

Solemnly affirm our determination to implement the recommendations and conclusions of this Declaration and thus ensure sustainable growth and development.

We solemnly appeal for the mobilization, before it is too late, of all the Continent's internal resources at all levels (local, provincial, national, sub-regional, regional) so that AFRICA CAN EVENTUALLY FEED ITS PEOPLE WITHOUT CONTINUING TO DESTROY ITS LAND BASE and to suffer important loss of human life.

We are convinced that the individual and collective achievement of this COMMON PRIORITY OBJECTIVE calls for an effective commitment on the part of our people and our governments, and therefore the implementation of the sound decisions included in the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980, particularly the allocation of significant national budgetary resources to agriculture and the orientation of a substantial share of internal and external investment the promotion of sustainable, viable and socially-acceptable agriculture.

In this long-term quest for survival development, we undertake to initiate actions with our own forces, in the knowledge that we can count on the moral and material support of the peoples and governments of countries that are our friends, and of the international organizations.

To this end, we are appealing to FAO and the donor community to mobilize new and additional resources to bolster our national efforts, particularly in the following areas:

- a. the conservation and protection of natural resources for sustainable development, notably through a revision of agrarian legislation and land tenure and production structures to awaken the people's concern for soil conservation and rehabilitation;
- b. food security, notably through the implementation of the African recommendations at the International Conference on Nutrition, and through the launching of new special programmes and funds for Africa;
- c. the effective participation of rural communities, and particularly women and the young, in decisions relating to investment, producer price policies, agricultural input prices etc.;
- d. the development of a sub-regional and regional approach to issues that transcend national boundaries or that permit significant economies of scale, in particular the harnessing of the water and energy resources of the numerous transnational river basins, the production of inputs and the management of post-harvest activities including agricultural commodity processing, storage and marketing;
- e. the development of technologies (the manufacture of implements, irrigation equipment and materials, etc.) adapted to the situation and needs of African farmers and to environmental protection;
- f. national capacity building;
- g. intra-regional cooperation, particularly in communications, infrastructure, trade and agricultural fairs.

We, therefore, adopt this ACCRA DECLARATION ON A SOUND ENVIRONMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA, in the sincere belief that its objective will be achieved by our Governments and our Peoples, with the full support of FAO and of the whole international community.

APPENDIX E

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY, FLIGHT LIEUTENANT JERRY JOHN RAWLINGS
CHAIRMAN OF THE PROVISIONAL NATIONAL DEFENCE COUNCIL (PNDC)

Mr Chairman,
Colleague Members of the PNDC,
PNDC Secretaries of State,
Director-General of FAO,
FAO Regional Representative for Africa,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates and Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the people and Government of Ghana, and on my own behalf, I wish to take this opportunity to extend to you a hearty and warm welcome to Ghana.

As you may have observed, the rains are with us during this period, and you can easily imagine the hopes and anxieties of our people, especially our hardworking farmers who have laboured from season to season to keep everyone's body and soul together.

Understandably, those of us who reap the greatest benefit from their labours often take the bounty we enjoy for granted, hardly recognizing the fact that some of our neighbours and perhaps even our own brothers and sisters in disadvantaged circumstances have to contend with another reality - the viciousness of hunger.

In 1983, under the ravages of drought and bushfires, Ghanaians were rudely reminded of the pain and indignity, as well as the dehumanizing effects of food shortage. The average Ghanaian knows what the concept of food security means from experience, and it is not surprising that the people readily and selflessly extended a hand of compassion to their brothers from some neighbouring countries who were also confronted with drought at a time when our situation could hardly be said to have stabilized.

Your Excellencies, in evoking these memories, my only wish is to underscore in no uncertain terms that the food crisis in Africa constitutes yet another serious blight on modern civilization. The persistence of hunger in the world amidst overflowing granaries is more than a mere paradox.

The food crisis is a mirror of the world's conscience, and the worst indictment against those who wallow in abundance, literally choking under the weight of overconsumption, while their undernourished fellows scramble for crumbs to sustain skeletal frames hanging on borrowed time and groaning under the weight of a life that may have become too burdensome to be worth living.

Food is so basic a need, that one can say it is the ultimate measure of the human condition, of man's capacity for love and compassion, in one instance, and of man's inhumanity to man, at another level.

Given our own experience in the recent past, this Conference is, therefore, of particular significance to us in Ghana, as I believe it is for all who have known and are committed to the elimination of the evil of hunger from the world.

Besides, in spite of the fact that Ghana is the host of the Africa Regional Office of the Food and Agriculture Organization, this is the first time in the thirty-five years of cordial and mutually-productive collaboration between FAO and our country that we have been privileged to host the continental Conference.

Even though approximately seventy percent of our people are engaged in agriculture, most of them are simple illiterate folk who, unfortunately, are not in a position to directly appreciate the in-depth discussions and profound expositions which will emanate from this Conference Hall. Sad as it may be, it is my hope that some way would be found to bring the rich knowledge of this Conference to the doorstep of these simple and honourable folk whose labours continue to ensure our survival.

Coming also, as it does, after the recent UN Conference on the Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, that is, the "Earth Summit 1992", it is significant that this Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference has chosen the theme, "Sustainable Agriculture and the Environment."

Once again, it is necessary to remind ourselves of the need not to restrict ourselves merely to stating fine ideals and prescribing solutions that seek only to address the symptoms of problems, rather than the fundamental issues at hand.

In spite of the massive awareness created by the "Earth Summit" of the critical state of the environment, the hopes generated there were soon dashed by its failure to meaningfully address the problem of reconciling environmental preservation with the legitimate concerns of the poor countries that are racing against time to realize and sustain modest economic goals, against great odds, with the meagre resources at their disposal.

No one will quarrel with the ideal of alleviating hunger, malnutrition, poverty and disease without destroying mankind's common heritage and source of sustenance - the environment.

It is fitting that future generations should not be deprived of the opportunity to live their lives on an earth capable of sustaining and enhancing their well-being. Perhaps if certain misconceived policies of the past had been identified for what they were, our generation would not be in its present predicament.

Soil erosion and desertification, deforestation, declining rainfall, bushfires, crop failure, over-grazing, hunger, malnutrition and, finally, death are all the consequences of man's legitimate pursuit of a means of livelihood and must be recognized as such. In fact, there is no shortage of knowledge and statistics on the causes and effects of environmental degradation.

Nonetheless, those who claim to be so concerned about the state of our environment now cannot be taken seriously unless they demonstrate

through deeds, not mere words, that they are also really interested in addressing the issues related to the economic well-being of all mankind, and especially those of the deprived segments.

Can we honestly assert that the international economic system as it stands now seriously favours the preservation of the environment? Did the concerns addressed by the recent G7 meeting in Munich demonstrate an unimpeachable commitment by the rich and powerful nations for the elimination of the fundamental causes of environmental degradation or its arrest?

While we certainly welcome the relief promised to the world's twenty poorest countries, primarily in sub-Saharan Africa, that are indebted to the tune of approximately US\$25.6 billion, we cannot say that this gesture presages a new era for the management of the international financial system which is responsible for a substantial portion of those debts in the first place.

Unless the problems retarding the development of the poor countries are addressed with the seriousness they deserve by the international community, we cannot claim to be truly committed to the promotion of a safe and sound environment.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, the world's population now stands at about 5 billion, of which two-thirds are in the less-developed world. Ghana has a fast growing population of 15 million. Already, we are witnessing a rapid exploitation of land and forest resources in a bid to alleviate poverty and find food for the growing population.

Illicit felling of trees and farming activities have had a devastating effect on one of our dams - on the Barekese Dam, near Kumasi in the Ashanti Region. Reports have it that after 242 farms had sprung up within the dam's catchment area of 4 400 hectares, water production capacity had been reduced from 48 million gallons to the present daily output of 12 million gallons. And again, the water level has dropped from 55 feet to its present depth of 50 feet.

In a nutshell, illegal farming and associated activities around the Barekese Dam have resulted in serious evaporation problems and subsequent reduction of the water level.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, this is only one example of a growing trend involving other sectors of the economy, apart from agriculture.

One could perhaps have justified or rationalized away this reckless encroachment on reserve land, if the produce made a visible impact on the accumulation of food reserves for the country. Unfortunately, most of our farmers engage in subsistence farming and their output is often marginal in real economic terms.

In other words, the price we have to pay in terms of environmental degradation merely to scrape food from the soil is too high. And we may definitely have to pay a higher price if the present trend in population growth continues, without any fundamental changes in our agricultural system.

Clearly, Ladies and Gentlemen, food production and distribution is no longer a national affair. To regard it as such is to lose the global perspective on the question of environment, particularly as it relates to agriculture.

Mr Chairman, for sometime now, a debate has been raging about what policies and strategies could best transform our traditional agricultural practices into a modern system based on technology that is appropriate for sustainable agriculture in a sound environment.

I am quite certain that we are all familiar with this debate and the issues at stake, which essentially boil down to the need to adapt and, where necessary, build upon the skills and implements used by our traditional farmers, thereby increasing their competence to acceptable standards commensurate with the challenges of modern agriculture.

Obviously, this goal can only be achieved through outlays of substantial amounts of resources for the required research services. Here, too, the vicious cycle of poverty has reared its ugly head and we painfully have to first wait for the benevolence of the rich North to show interest in these programmes, and then to make some resources available for their pursuit.

I must acknowledge the generosity of FAO and a few developed countries in this respect, though we are yet to make any substantial breakthroughs.

The issue of appropriate technology for sustainable agriculture in a sound environment also brings into focus the need for developing effective storage facilities. It is a fact that when the rains are favourable, we tend to have surpluses in the production of food. During such times, prices drop to uneconomic levels while food is allowed to go waste. The irony is that within a few months our people have to pay extremely high prices for the same products, simply because we do not have any effective means of storing the surplus products from the peak season.

The problem is common to all the poor countries and contributes to our inability to achieve real security in the production and distribution of food. In Ghana, about 45-60 percent of food products used to go to waste each year, until we improved our road and distribution networks and opened new markets for some products. The problem, however, still largely persists.

If developing countries had good storage facilities, then we could also alleviate hunger by absorbing surplus food produce from the rich North that, we know, sometimes have to contend with their perennial problem of over-production by destroying excess produce, to keep among other reasons, prices at stable levels. To them, perhaps it is all a simple matter of economics, but to the starving millions of Africa it amounts to a shocking violation of man's moral sensibilities. We in Africa, despite our poverty, share our meals with visitors even if they are strangers. We do not ask them to wait elsewhere until we finish our meals.

Food aid predicated upon disaster must give way to food aid predicated upon an honest recognition that we are all members of one family with a common stake in the destiny of our environment.

It is only such recognition of our common heritage that will give meaning and substance to the protestations of those who claim to be committed to the promotion of the democratic ideal throughout the world, in defence of human rights.

Democracy, Ladies and Gentlemen, originates from the need to recognize and defend the interest of the vulnerable in society and to alleviate their vulnerability so that they can function as equal members of society. Promoting the citizen's right to vote and elect some kind of government (usually composed of men who invariably do not share in the citizen's condition of vulnerability), while ignoring the conditions that reinforce his vulnerability in society, is, to say the least, fraudulent.

Mr Director-General, I wish to take this opportunity to urge distinguished delegates not to lose sight of the vital linkages between the various issues connected with the theme chosen for this Conference. While isolating some of the distressing symptoms of the wider ills affecting African nations permits in-depth analysis and specific solutions, one invariably comes face to face with the same structural and resource limitations when it comes to effecting the prescribed solutions.

We have seen it in the Health Forum held in Accra last December, and it is already evident that the far-reaching decisions embodied in Agenda 21 of the "Earth Summit" of June 1992 can only be implemented if the international financial arrangements necessary for giving practical effect to those decisions are critically examined and responsibly shared.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to take this opportunity to assure you, distinguished delegates, that we in Ghana have been observing with satisfaction the remarkable and equivocal stand of the FAO on issues which we in the developing countries consider fundamental to our survival.

Through its continuous confrontation with natural and other forms of disaster, the FAO has come to acquire a distinct conscience appreciating the fact that the need to protect and uplift the lives of the hungry and poor is the most critical question of our time.

We must not relent in our efforts to make the rich North conscious of the precarious condition of the overwhelming majority of humanity. It is only when they show a readiness to fulfill this moral obligation that conferences like this will make the desired impact. Nothing short of that preparedness will bring us out of our predicament.

Distinguished Delegates, as worthy ambassadors of the nations of our continent, I trust that your deliberations in Accra will bring to the fore the need to approach our problems from a common perspective, while strengthening our resolve to work together.

I also hope you will find the facilities placed at your disposal satisfactory, and that you will certainly not find our proverbial hospitality wanting.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and hope you will carry away with you happy memories of this Conference in Ghana.

Thank you very much.

APPENDIX F

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Mr Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

I should like to begin by paying homage to the city and country that are today hosting the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa. That this important African meeting is being held right here in Accra is to my mind both a symbol and an omen, for this city was the cradle of our Africa Region. In 1958, when Ghana was one of the few countries of this continent to have gained independence - a striking example to all those with similar ambitions - it was in this very place that the meeting establishing FAO's Africa Region was held. And it was as a logical consequence of this event that our Regional Office came to be established here. Accra has thus been for more than thirty years the hub of concerted and unstinting efforts by FAO and its Member Nations to further agricultural and rural development in Africa and the advancement of its people. As I greet the eminent dignitaries attending this African Agricultural Summit, I wish to express our sincere thanks to the Government of Ghana, to the Ghanaian people and to the city of Accra for the wonderful welcome that they have extended to us.

New reasons for hope

As I look back to your last Regional Conference in 1990, I can see new reasons for hope. There is no doubt that Africa is on the move. The whole continent is being swept by a powerful tide of ideas and aspirations that has triggered a genuine move towards democracy, even though it is still tenuous and constantly under threat of disruption. The changing political situation in South Africa will undoubtedly have important consequences and should result in positive economic repercussions.

On the African economic front the situation is by no means at a standstill, and a glimmer of light is being shed by the multilateral negotiations known as the Uruguay Round. We profoundly hope that an agreement will be to everyone's advantage and herald a change of climate in international trade relations. Nor should we overlook the willingness of certain major creditor nations to alleviate or even to cancel the debts of several African countries, nor the fact that the providers of aid - particularly the World Bank and the African Development Bank, whose efforts I commend - have increased their allocation of resources for African development, and are helping many countries to manage their economies.

In areas concerning us even more directly, there has been very positive action taken towards agrarian reform, while some notable successes have been scored in the struggle against several scourges: no major outbreak of rinderpest has been reported recently; the desert locust's seasonal upsurges are gradually being contained and brought under control; and, finally, the complete eradication of the New World screwworm appears to be well under way. It goes without saying that FAO is pleased to have

been able to make an effective contribution to these achievements while, at the same time, pursuing its efforts to conserve and to restore African land, to develop technical cooperation among developing countries and to strengthen exchanges, cooperation and integration at the regional level.

Increasing difficulties

Unfortunately, these are but isolated beacons of hope in a sea of trouble and tribulation. Dark clouds have gathered over three major areas: the natural environment and population growth, the economic context, and human activity.

The state of the natural environment

Though by no means as rich as is sometimes imagined, the continent is certainly not without natural resources: minerals, oil and gas, water, land and forests, fish and countless animal and plant species. However, the development and use of these resources is still confronted with insurmountable problems such as weather, soil fragility, disease and uneven distribution of water. Many African countries seem condemned never to attain food self-sufficiency, while various events have brought about shortages even in countries that are traditionally exporters. For over two years eastern and southern Africa have been in the throes of a terrifying drought, undoubtedly the worst that the area has seen for a hundred years; while, in many other parts of Africa, rainfall has been light and erratic. Such natural disasters are a cruel affliction for agricultural production.

The population explosion

Africa is no more successful in controlling its population growth today than in the past and the region still has an annual growth rate of more than 3 percent. The consequences of this are all too clear: there is greater pressure on land resources; fallow periods are being shortened; overstocked grasslands are becoming exhausted; the forest is being eaten away by expanding croplands and increased fuelwood gathering; the ecological balance is being disrupted; soils are and water resources are drying up; yields are being reduced; incomes are falling and unemployment is rising; malnutrition and hunger are causing devastation; and the desert and poverty are taking over the countryside. The only salvation left for the peasant population - which too often proves to be an illusion - is to flee to the city or to emigrate.

Emigration

Emigration has reached such proportions that I feel I must mention it here. For historical and geographic reasons, African migrants head mainly for Europe, where their traditional knowledge and skills have little relevance and where they are thus obliged to accept the most menial, unskilled and poorly paid jobs. Because of their sheer numbers, their presence affects the lifestyles, cultures and even the religions of their host countries, while the serious unemployment problem in Europe fuels tensions. Such circumstances, unfortunately, provide a natural breeding ground for racism, which essentially feeds on misunderstanding and fear of outsiders.

The economic context

While emigrant remittances are sometimes an important source of foreign exchange, the African economy as a whole continues to depend exclusively on raw materials, despite the hopes attached to other potential sources of foreign currency, such as tourism.

Low industrialization

However, except for some remarkable successes such as that of Mauritius, the efforts made here and there to diversify and to industrialize have not achieved the expected results. We may wonder why, when countries in Asia and Latin America have managed to escape the straitjacket of an exclusively agricultural economy. There are many reasons: the weakness of excessively fragmented domestic markets; an insufficient savings capacity, burdened by huge economic and social infrastructure requirements; and the long cultural transition needed to produce a workforce capable of meticulous and repetitive industrial work, as in the case of textiles and electronics.

Trade

Africa must therefore rely principally on the export of its raw materials to further its development and to pay for its imports. The raw materials produced by the region's agricultural sector are mainly tropical commodities such as coffee, tea, cocoa, cotton and palm oil. However, demand for these goods in the developed countries is largely satisfied and shows no sign of increasing. This has led to a continuous fall in their market prices. A simple comparison of two sets of figures provides an eloquent testimony. Thus, while the volume of African exports increases by an average of approximately four percent per year, export earnings continue to fall by six percent. When developed countries have a surplus, they have the means to support production either by subsidizing their farmers or by generously purchasing mountains of cereals for which world prices are low. In Africa, however, governments are too poor to manage their surpluses and to subsidize agriculture. When their products are priced too low, they fall deeper into debt. As African farmers receive no help, they can only raise their income by producing more - using methods that, in the absence of inputs, gradually undermine the resource base. Whichever way we look at it, the future has been pledged. Surpluses continue to mount, commodities continue to depreciate and natural resources continue to diminish.

Aid is obviously not a viable solution and, today, only serves as a derisory palliative. But even if sufficient aid were provided, should Africa be made permanently dependent on handouts? This should not be your Region's vocation, nor can it be the ambition of its governors or its people. In order to progress, Africa needs to be in a position to earn enough from its labour and its trade, and this calls for the higher prices. Yet, despite the GATT negotiations, there is at present no sign of a mechanism that is likely to raise prices to remunerative levels. I have already commended the work of the World Bank and the African Development Bank, but neither of these institutions is in a position to influence prices. What is more, the continuing climate of world recession provides little hope for an early improvement.

Human activity

Structural adjustment

The people of Africa, however, have not been idle in the face of these adverse conditions. Many African governments, encouraged by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have introduced measures to remedy the situation through structural adjustment programmes.

The aim of these programmes is, on the one hand, to reduce expenditure and demand and, on the other, to increase supply and export earnings. However, weak economies and national poverty have prevented a reversal of the course of events since 1990, and the impact on vulnerable population groups has been particularly hard, especially with regard to food security.

Two out of the three countries in sub-Saharan Africa are categorized as low-income countries, while 28 of the United Nations' 42 least-developed countries are in Africa. In terms of human distress, this means that about one-half of the population is living below the poverty threshold. The most immediate consequence is that one in three Africans is threatened by malnutrition.

International aid

Admittedly, international aid has mitigated the consequences of this situation, but the level of assistance has been modest, and good intentions are not in themselves sufficient. For example, the United Nations Conference on the Least-developed Countries, held in 1990, produced firm promises that official assistance for the development of these countries would be significantly raised but, in practice, these pledges have come to little. The delivery of food aid to its intended recipients is fraught with obstacles, while sometimes it may itself have negative consequences, such as reducing local production and shifting population preferences away from traditional to imported foods.

War and conflict

If the best-intentioned human interventions have done little to change the fate and future of Africans, what can be said of humanity's destructive actions? Alas, the push towards democracy is only too often accompanied by tensions and destabilizing domestic conflicts. Though they may not receive attention from the outside world, murderous wars nevertheless continue to tear Africa apart. While Ethiopia still smoulders, new fires are flaring up and old ones being rekindled in Somalia, the Sudan and elsewhere. To the number of direct victims of these conflicts, we must also add all those who suffer and die because agricultural production has been wiped out and harvests destroyed, and because relief operations are unable to get through.

Is the future barred?

As is my custom, I have not minced my words, but I should not like you to think that I am totally given over to pessimism. To reject illusions is not the same as abandoning oneself to despair. On the contrary, my presentation is only meant to spur commitment towards strong and determined

action. The road to salvation is narrow and hard, but it does exist and I would like to identify some of the landmarks along the way.

Africa's winning cards

First of all, Africa is not without its winning cards. I have already mentioned its natural resources, but let us not forget the richest of these - its people, with their wonderful blend of ancestral wisdom and youthful vitality. I refer to the trained professionals who are still too few, but who are determined to modernize their countries; I refer to the countless small-scale farmers, foresters and fisherfolk who are the main protagonists of development and should be the first to reap its rewards; and I refer to women, to the admirable women of Africa who are so often neglected but whose courage and silent determination to support their families and to serve their communities is a powerful reason for hope.

... and how to play them

Africa should make the most of its winning cards, but the first prerequisite for success is political commitment. Governments must understand that agriculture is the only possible springboard for progress and act accordingly, which means implementing the options that give the agricultural sector priority in policy and budgetary matters. An immense educational effort is needed to involve the whole population in this commitment; the necessary resources must be allocated for the training of experts and technicians at all levels while at the same time, a communication, information and extension campaign, with the people as its target, must be relentlessly pursued.

The sustained growth of agricultural and food production is a long and exacting task to which everyone should contribute. It is an undertaking that involves what we have called the four "i's of agricultural development: incentives, inputs, institutions and infrastructures.

Such growth must avoid irreversible damage to the resource base and must therefore be based on strategies protecting the environment. Croplands should no longer be extended at the expense of forests and marginal land but, rather, sustainable farming practices should be intensified while rigorous reforestation programmes are implemented. The increased use of the inputs that I mentioned earlier must be handled with care and judgement. The agrarian reform carried out so far must continue to play its part in this process, to which must be closely linked concerted measures to control population growth.

Africa must still do all it can to enhance its economic environment. This means a truly African economic integration, through the establishment of a solid common market that will reinforce the region's position in trade negotiations with the rest of the world and, above all, with the developing countries.

I shall not dwell on these points, as they are high on your agenda, and I have no wish to anticipate further your discussions.

Africa's Allies

As the world becomes increasingly interdependent, Africa will not be able to rise from its economic depression without becoming degraded help.

But Africa is not alone; it has many allies. The successive Lomé conventions, the establishment of the ACP system (including the African, Caribbean and Pacific states), and the debt alleviation granted by certain creditors are just some examples of Africa's importance to the world in the eyes of many developed countries that are ready to give expression to their solidarity. Recently, though, enormous aid requirements have emerged in states located nearer to these same developed countries, arousing fears that the latter may withdraw from Africa to focus their attention on Eastern Europe. Through this assembly, I urgently call upon them to continue their work in Africa and to intensify it, regardless of these new needs, for we are dealing not only with the future of a continent but also with the future of the whole planet.

The international community

Africa's importance to the world is borne out by its position at the top of our international community's concerns. The whole of the United Nations system is with you and is increasingly active in its support. The General Assembly's extraordinary session on Africa is but one example of this solidarity.

In this connection, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held recently in Rio de Janeiro, was highly significant. The problems of Africa, and particularly those of its agricultural sector, were at the centre of discussions. Though the outcome did not live up to our expectation - particularly with regard to funding, scheduling, the pooling of biotechnologies and countries' rights concerning their genetic resources - the Conference succeeded in drawing world attention to the risks at stake, and governments have taken a decisive step in the right direction.

FAO's Action

FAO is proud to feature among the most fervent defenders of Africa's interests. We broke ground with our comprehensive study on the current status and future development of African agriculture. This was not a desk study artificially moulded onto the reality of Africa; rather, it was an analysis and a reflection based on the experience and participation of numerous African experts, as well as our representatives and field staff. I am convinced that this approach has been a determining factor in maintaining the study's validity.

Despite unprecedented financial problems, Africa continues to receive the lion's share of our programmes and of our budgetary and extrabudgetary resources. On this subject, I am happy to pay tribute to the devoted and capable work of our Regional Office, under the dynamic leadership of the Regional Representative, my friend and colleague Mr N'Daw.

I mentioned earlier the problems of hunger and malnutrition in Africa. As you can well imagine, these are constantly on our minds as, together with our partners in the World Health Organization, we organize the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN), to be held in Rome this December. Two regional meetings have already been held with regard to this event, and FAO has provided its full technical support for the drafting of an authoritative background document on nutrition in Africa. These works will not fail to enlighten and to guide the ICN, on which we pin great hopes.

Conclusion

Before concluding, I should like to make a plea to the community of nations to understand the African situation. We tend to see important human causes in monolithic terms, whether they be the freedom and rights of the individual or the conservation of the environment. Because of this, we automatically gauge our solidarity towards a particular country according to its conformity to our values. Yet I would humbly and earnestly request that care, flexibility and delicacy be used in such an approach to Africa. If we consider the Region's immense difficulties, we will understand how great an effort and sacrifice are needed for each small step towards democracy and human advancement and also towards the protection of natural resources. Africa will be unable to make significant progress in any area, be it physical, political or moral, if it remains bogged down in poverty. Let us therefore begin by helping it to break free.

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, as always, I have spoken to you as a friend. Africa and Africans are increasingly in my heart and on my mind. Rest assured that I shall always passionately advocate the development and advancement of this Region which is so dear to me. With this in mind, it is my sincere and brotherly hope that, under the skies of Accra, your discussions will be fruitful and lead to a brighter future.

Thank you.

APPENDIX G

VOTE OF THANKS

Mr Chairman,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to give the vote of thanks at the closing ceremony of this august gathering to the Head of State of Ghana and Chairman of the Provisional National Defence Council, Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, for graciously agreeing to open this Conference and to the Government and People of the Republic of Ghana.

On behalf of all the Ministers and their delegations, we express our deep appreciation for the warm welcome and remarkable Ghanaian hospitality extended to us.

We also express our appreciation for the excellent facilities placed at our disposal which contributed in no small measure to the success of this very important meeting in this historic and beautiful capital, the cradle of political awareness in Africa.

We thank all the observers to this meeting who have found the time to come and enrich our deliberations. In particular, we thank the delegate from the United States of America for conveying his country's pledge to pay its arrears to the budget.

And, we take this opportunity to also congratulate the organizers of this Conference, in particular the Ghana PNDC Secretary for Agriculture and his Ministry, the Director-General of FAO, the Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa and their staff, as well as the interpreters, ushers, drivers and all those who contributed to the smooth-running of the meeting.

Thank you and a pleasant and safe journey back home.

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