

Statement delivered by African Group Chair ambassador Jackline Yonga - Agenda item VI

Thank you Mr Chair for giving me, as the Chair of the Africa Regional Group, the opportunity of sharing in the name of our Group, what is pivotal in Africa,

I'm talking about the youth.

The demographic growth is, in Africa, extraordinary: according to AU and United Nations projections, Africa population is expected to double by 2050, from 1.2 billion people to 2.4 billion, and of over 60% predominantly young people, under 25 years old.

Agriculture remains a major sector in most African economies, and shall play the key role of economic development for structural transformation in Africa, especially in terms of generating sustainable, inclusive jobs for African youth in the agri-food sector and rural economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which reveals the fragility of Africa food systems, in addition to the challenges facing food security and nutrition on the continent, such as chronic poverty, malnutrition, threats to environment, conflicts, population growth.

When it comes to the future of agriculture and food systems, the youth decent employment dilemma is unique. For Africa to achieve shared prosperity and poverty elimination, it is critical to create and expand decent jobs for youth in rural and urban areas, as well as to contribute to the development of food systems that are both sustainable and resilient.

It is estimated that the continent needs to create 18 million new jobs each year up to 2035, in order to absorb new labour market entrants, compared to the 3 million jobs per year currently created in the formal economy.

Very recently, African leaders have approved the Africa Continental Free Trade Area aimed at boosting intra-Africa trade and to contribute to the Africa food sovereignty.

Moreover, demographic trends and the increasing mobility and migration of African youth add a new dimension to the need of a common agenda to promote sustainable, resilient and inclusive food system, which will create the jobs that the continent needs and to make the most of the opportunities it offers while sustainably managing the already scarce natural resources and lifting the pressure on our biodiversity.

Indeed, sustainable climate-smart agriculture is a cornerstone for economic development and sustainable growth on the continent, as stated in Africa Agenda 2063 vision and priorities.

Furthermore, the African Union Country Agribusiness Partnership Framework (CAP-F), has been developed, thanks to the support of FAO, EU and other partners, as a mechanism for mobilizing private sector investments, promoting jobs and wealth creation in Africa, particularly for youth and women.

Through multi-stakeholder engagements and in-depth country case studies, a draft Investment Guidelines for Youth in Agri-Food Systems in Africa has been produced by FAO in partnership with the AUC. The goal of this handbook is to serve as a resource for governmental and private sector partners, including financial institutions, civil society actors, youth-led organizations, and enterprises across the region, who want to encourage more investment in job creation and agricultural growth in rural areas of Africa.

We may bear in mind the CFS Principles for Responsible Agriculture Investments in Agriculture and Food systems that need to be implemented by all, provided we commit to promote the related enabling environment and supportive measures for young people to start, maintain, and expand viable agri-businesses.

However, the diversity of young people and the variety of situations and conditions they encounter across the continent, necessitates the consideration of various pathways and tactics, as well as the full

participation of young people as major players in the development of those programs, for effective ownership.

The implementation process of the Africa agriculture flagship programme, namely the CAADP (Comprehensive Africa Agriculture development programme) has offered to most of the African countries, through the formulation of their national agriculture investment plan (second generation), by incorporating further principles deriving from the Malabo declaration strategy, to further streamline these priorities and develop specific youth entrepreneurship initiatives.

Thank you Mr Chair.