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Workshop on Agriculture Systems at Risk, Priority actions towards climate change adaptation and Launch of the Global Soil Partnership for West and Central Africa

4 February 2013 -Accra, Ghana

Opening Remarks

Maria Helena Semedo

Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for Africa

*Distinguished Directors of ECOWAS,
Distinguished Deputy Director of the Ministry of Food And Agriculture of Ghana.
Distinguished Regional Representative of the Swedish International Development Agency,
Distinguished Directors from Ministries of Water and Agriculture, Directors of National
Soil Institutions and GEF country focal points,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great pleasure for me, on behalf of the FAO Director-General, to welcome you all to this important workshop and to express you my sincere gratitude for having accepted to convene together in one gathering in order to identify priority actions for Climate change Adaptation within the agriculture sector and participate in the launch of the Global Soil Partnership.

I am convinced, indeed, that you constitute le “noyau dur” (core team) that can provide the required thrust towards placing climate change adaptation firmly on the governance agenda of regional and national governments.

As we all know, the political will and the ownership of the Countries in the development processes are, indeed, crucial for the success and the sustainability of all our interventions.

In this regard, allow me to recall that the African Members States during the 27th FAO Regional Conference for Africa, held in Brazzaville Congo in April 2012, endorsed climate change among the regional priority areas towards agricultural development in the Africa Region.

Indeed, agriculture is among the most vulnerable sectors to the effects of climate change having mostly negative consequence on productivity, production stability and income generation in areas that already have high levels of food insecurity.

Yet, the projected increase in world population during the next 40 years, which should reach 9.1 billion in 2050, calls for agriculture to significantly step up its productivity and production levels.

These factors demonstrate the urgency of implementing measures that favour actions and policies that simultaneously address climate change mitigation and adaptation in agriculture while supporting development objectives and ensuring food security.

You will all concur with me that more productive and resilient agriculture needs better management of natural resources, such as land, water, soil and genetic resources and that this task, in an environment of climate change, is becoming more and more complex requiring the involvement of different stakeholders with a complementary knowledge and perspectives.

It is with this vision that FAO, in collaboration with ECOWAS, CILSS /AGRHYMET and the Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) invested towards the organization of this Meeting.

This Partnership is, indeed, a great sign of institutional collaboration and networking, which I consider a milestone in our quest to achieve our common objective: the overall growth, in a sustainable manner, of the agricultural sector in our Continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To be effective in our mandate, it results imperative to build strong and strategic partnership.

Hence, the added value of this meeting where different sectors – agriculture , water, soils and environment join together to agree on priority actions for climate change adaptation.

Let me highlight, indeed, that adaptation to climate change is a multidimensional, ecological and socio-economic process that requires broad-based commitment by the global community, more substantial financial transfers to developing countries and concerted policy action.

Appropriate financing mechanism and additional investments in the agricultural sector are indeed fundamental and should be a key component of our collaborative endeavour.

In this regard, let me emphasize the importance of having with us the focal points of the Global Environment Facility and let me encourage all of you to identify, throughout the workshop, actions to be considered for funding under GEF-6.

Before concluding my remarks, permit me to personally thank the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) who have partnered with us under the project “Strengthening capacity for climate change adaptation in Sub-Saharan Africa”.

I am glad indeed that Mr. Göran Björkdahl the Sida Regional Representative for West Africa is in attendance throughout the workshop.

I also wish to thank USAID and the EU delegation that have shown interest to collaborate with us on possible follow-up actions. I invite other partners present to discuss possible areas of collaboration.

*Distinguished invitees,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

Let me conclude by highlighting that, as we all know, there are already a lot of strategies, plan of actions and initiatives both in the Region and in your own countries.

I wish, therefore, to ask all of you to focus and concentrate your important discussions and brainstorming throughout these two-day workshop on two crucial words: **prioritization and coordination.**

I wish you all very fruitful discussion and successful deliberations!

Thank you for your kind attention.