

Joint Conference of African Ministers of Agriculture, Lands and Livestock

Addis Ababa, 23-24 April 2009

Statement by EU

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you for inviting the EU as one of the Development partners to make an introductory statement at this meeting, which comes at a crucial moment for African agriculture. To us, your kind invitation is an expression of the growing ties between Africa and the EU in development cooperation around agriculture and food security, which is also expressed in the Partnership on MDGs that the EU and Africa concluded in Lisbon in December 2007.

In this short statement, I would like to raise three points.

First, African agriculture currently receives much more attention than in the recent past. This is rightly so, but the **profile of agriculture needs to be raised even further**. We all know that the challenges to agriculture are numerous, including the low levels of productivity, the need to address climate change in agriculture, the governance of the sector, the issues around land policy and land tenure, the sustainable management of natural resources under conditions of increasing population pressure. There is also a challenge around the increased interest in foreign direct investment for food exports and how to make such investments benefit small scale farmers. But such challenges also provide opportunities. Agriculture in Africa is a sector that can grow and that work to reduce poverty, provided the right policy environment exists, provided the right incentives are offered, and provided sufficient investments take place in supporting infrastructure, research and organisations. This implies that agriculture needs to be brought back to the centre of policy discussions, of poverty reduction strategies, and of budgeting processes. The upcoming African Summit with its focus on agricultural investments forms an excellent opportunity for all of us to remind Heads of State of the continuous need to put agriculture at the centre of development efforts.

My second point is around **CAADP**. CAADP forms the Africa-led agenda for agricultural development and Africa can be proud of this programme. While CAADP is often equated with the Maputo pledges of 6% agricultural growth and 10% of national budgets devoted to agriculture and rural development, it is in our opinion much more than that. Within the EU, we have been following CAADP over the past few years and have noted that CAADP has developed over time and is at the moment more considered as a process. A process that assist countries in improving the quality of its agricultural planning and policy making, making use of existing expertise in centres of knowledge around the continent. A process also that is based on sound principles, like evidence-based policy making, like regular consultations with all relevant stakeholders, notably

farmer organizations, and that takes the regional integration dimension seriously. The EU has expressed its support to CAADP at various occasions. It actively supports the various CAADP initiatives at continental and regional levels. Where the CAADP principles are applied at national levels, similarly positive responses are and will be made as well.

My third and last point concerns **EU support to agriculture and food security to Africa**. The level of this support is increasing and that in its own right is not unrelated to both the importance attached to the sector and to the positive developments around CAADP. The increase is evident by the recent approval of the €1 billion Food Facility, which is a direct response to the global food crisis that emerged after the food price spikes of 2007 and 2008. A few weeks ago, the European Commission approved the detailed plan for the Facility, which a.o. indicates that around €550 million will be allocated to 30 target countries in Africa. But the increase in assistance to agriculture and food security has also been noticeable in the national level cooperation programmes funded by the European Development Fund. Furthermore, in the coming year, all national-level cooperation programmes will be subject to a Mid-Term Review, which will ask questions around the choice of focal sectors of cooperation and balance of funds between sectors. It provides a further opportunity for the African countries and the EU to jointly assess the assistance to agriculture and food security in the various countries and to adjust it where desirable.

Mr/mrs chairman, I like to conclude with an African proverb I came across recently. It is from Ghana and goes as follows: *'The farm of the endless talker never produces much'*. I therefore end my remarks here.