

**38<sup>TH</sup> (SPECIAL) SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY, 11MAY, 2012, ROME: STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE AFRICAN GROUP**

The Chairman of CFS, Mr. Yaya Olaniran, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to FAO, Nigeria

The Director General of FAO, Dr José Graziano da Silva

Mr Carlos Sere, Chief development Strategist of IFAD

Mr Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director of WFP

Permanent Representatives, representatives of the farmer organizations, private sector and NGOs, CFS Secretariat and development partners.

I would like to start my address by congratulating the Chairman, the Bureau and the Advisory Group of the World Committee on Food Security stakeholders, Dr Meyers, Chairperson, and Mrs Kvitashvili, Co-chairperson, of the OEWG of the VG and their team, Member Countries, Farmer Organizations, Private Sector, NGOs, Research Organizations, and all the development partners for concluding the negotiations on the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of national Food Security.

The endorsement of these guidelines has provided further impetus for the Land policy initiatives already began on the African continent.

Land is crucial to African development as the majority of African people rely on access to and use of land for their livelihoods.

In recognition of the centrality of land in Africa's development, the Land Policy Initiative (LPI) was established in 2006 as a unique joint continental

initiative of the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank.

The first phase of the Land Policy Initiative, from 2006-2009 was dedicated to highly participatory development of a *Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa*, a tool to facilitate land policy development, implementation and monitoring at national, sub-regional and continental level.

The initiative was provided high political legitimacy after being endorsed by the Summit of African Heads of State and Government and adoption of a *Declaration on Land* calling for the use of the *Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa* at country level, as a valid tool to inform national land policy processes at national and regional levels. The just endorsed and more elaborate Voluntary Guidelines will provide further guidance in this regard.

The Land Policy Initiative of the AU is now preparing for the implementation of the *Declaration on Land*, through a 5 year Strategic Plan which includes some of the following elements:-

- *Advocating for the inclusion of land in the development agenda of the African Tripartite consortium (AUC-ECA-AFDB), the Regional Economic Communities, AU Member States and development partners;*
- *Coordinating and galvanizing the efforts of partners towards effective partnerships for the implementation of the African agenda on land, as stated in the Declaration on Land adopted by the African Heads of State and Governments;*
- *Facilitating resource mobilization in support of land policy related research, advocacy capacity building, technical support and advisory services;*

- *Facilitating dialogue on land related issues with a view to raising awareness on the need to address the challenges that hamper the appropriate utilization of land toward Africa's socio- economic development, peace and security and environmental sustainability;*
- *Facilitating capacity building at all levels in support of land policy development and implementation in Africa;*
- *Providing technical support and advisory services to AU member states and Regional Economic Communities on land policy development and implementation;*
- *Promoting networking and knowledge sharing at all levels in order to promote evidence based land policy formulation and implementation;*
- *Develop and build capacity for monitoring and evaluation systems and tools in support of land policy development and implementation;*

Some of the initiatives already undertaken under the Strategic Plan include;-

- Conducting training of Trainers session in land policy development;
- Preparation of a background document on *Tracking Progress in Land Policy Development and Implementation in Africa;*
- Technical support to ECOWAS to harmonize the overlapping land initiatives;
- Study on land and conflicts in East Africa;
- Development of a Virtual African Land Policy and Administration Facility, a data base on African Land experts and land related

information and platform for increased networking on land policy in the continent.

We hope that FAO and development partners can partner with the AU Commission in implementing the Strategic Plan.

On behalf of the African Permanent representatives I therefore call on the Committee on World Food Security, the Rome based agencies, and development partners to partner with regional, sub-regional organizations and member countries to advocate for the inclusion of land in development agendas, and to mobilize more resources for the implementation of land related policy initiatives.

We firmly believe that the land policy initiatives must start at country level, with government working with stakeholders to undertake audits of existing policy frameworks and administrative tools, using the Voluntary Guidelines and other region specific tools, then craft country specific policies in order to ensure that such frameworks provide farmers, marginalized groups, including women, fisher-folk and pastoralists with the necessary productive assets to play a meaningful role in food security and nutrition programmes.

*Finally we recommend that CFS use its global role in policy coherence on food security and nutrition actions to ensure that the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests are widely known and that resources and technical support, mobilized to ensure that regional and country initiatives in the area of land policy are supported.*