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**Statement
of
The African Union Commission
at
The 56th Session of the UN Commission on
Status of Women
by
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Directorate
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and
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of the CSW**

**New York
USA.**

5 March 2012

H. E. Chairperson of the 55th Session of the CSW

H. E. Madame Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director and Under Secretary General of United Nations

Honourable Ministers

Excellencies Ambassadors

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of H.E. the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Jean Ping, I have the honour to make a statement at the 56th Session of Commission on Status of Women on theme is ***Empowerment of Rural Women and their Role in Poverty and Hunger Eradication, Development and Current Challenges***

Let me also join earlier speakers by congratulating the Chairperson and members of the Bureau for their elections and the efficient way in which they are conducting this meeting. The AU Commission also wishes to aligns itself to statements made by Algeria on behalf of G77 and the Statement made by Tunisia on behalf of the Africa Group.

On the outset, rural women constitute more than half of the 50% of Africa's 80% rural population. Some of them live in the remotest parts of the continent with little or no access to basic and essential services. The Au also recognize those urban poor women who also constitute majority of our citizens living in urban slums, sometimes in same conditions as the rural women. The reason why rural women continue to experience poverty, hunger and under development are all known and well researched and yet little progress has been made.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Most statements from African member states have shared measures that have been taken at the national level to fight these challenges. The African Union statement will try to demonstrate some (not all) measures that have been taken at the Regional level by the Union to recognize the critical role of rural women who continue to produce and feed the entire continent despite their under privileged conditions.

1. The African Union chose the International Rural Women's Day (15th October 2010) to launch African Women's Decade 2010-2020 in Nairobi Kenya. This move was instrumental in giving prominence to African Rural Women, who constituted 60% of the participants to the launch
2. The Theme chosen for the African Women's Decade is 'Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment' which again emphasizes that during the next 10 years, the African continent will be laying special attention to rural women's needs
3. The theme for the 56th CSW which focuses on rural women's contribution to development, their Role in fighting poverty and hunger Eradication coincides with the African Women's Decade theme for 2012, which is **"Agriculture and Food Security"**
4. In recognizing and appreciating the linkages between the 56th Theme of the CSW and the theme for the African Women's Decade for 2012, the Commission of the African Union in collaboration with the International Labor Organization (ILO) Regional Office in Addis Ababa organized a Ministerial Dialogue on 3rd March 2012 between Ministers of Labor, Ministers of Gender, Women's Affairs and Rural women to

discourse on these two themes, share experiences, best practices and way forward in enriching the African Women's Decade implementation.

Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen

The synergy demonstrated by the African Women's Decade themes for 2012 and the theme chosen for 56th CSW, therefore provides yet another entry point for United Nations Agencies led by UN Women to engage the African continent and support the implementation of the Decade for the benefit of African Women in general and rural women in particular.

Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen

You will recall that at the 55th session of the CSW, the Commission shared the efforts it is making to support rural women's efforts through the Fund for African Women. Using its methodology of *one theme per year*, I am pleased to report that the Commission received 105 rural projects under 2011's Theme which was Women's Health, Maternal Mortality and HIV/AIDS. Half of these projects were approved for funding. I wish to observe here that the criteria used was biased to support rural projects and those projects that were not funded were not able to demonstrate that they were truly rural. In 2012, a similar Call will be made on the Theme on Agriculture and Food Security. The Commission wishes to encourage rural women to apply and all its Member states to facilitate this process

Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen

In conclusion, the Commission invites delegations to visit the African Women's decade Website at www.africanwomendecade.org for important documents where each of the 10 Decade Themes are elaborated.

I thank you for your kind attention.