

**CSD-16 Women's Major Group Statement  
Agriculture and Rural Development, May 9, 2008**

**Thank you Mr. Chairman. Gender inequalities hurt the economy. Emerging macroeconomic analysis on Africa by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank consistently show that gender inequality acts as a constraint to growth and poverty reduction. Greater gender equality could be a potent force for accelerated poverty reduction in Africa and by reducing gender inequality in access to and control of key resources necessary for growth is a concrete means of accelerating and diversifying growth, making growth more sustainable and ensuring that the poor, most of whom are women, both contribute and benefit from that growth.**

**Activities of women should be counted in the formal economy as income from agriculture goes to men. Women remain unwaged and invisible workers or are underpaid. This will only change if women are assisted to enter the local and international markets themselves. They need access to information and training.**

**The participation of women in rural development through commercial agriculture or related enterprises is hugely constrained by lack of infrastructure and transport, limited access to markets and market chains as well as lack of credit. An analysis of credit schemes in five African countries found that women received less than 10 percent of credit. This has to change, Mr. Chairman. Women must get recognition and pay for their contribution and must have training near their homes.**

**Women could assist the promotion of sustainable agriculture and rural development practices in Africa by:**

- 1. Mobilising professional women in the field of agriculture and co-operating with regional bodies to help mainstream gender.**
- 2. Stimulating institutional linkages and expanding women-focused NGOs and institutions**
- 3. identifying resource flows and funding mechanisms that benefit African women**
- 4. building capacity in all relevant organizations to ensure gender sensitivity.**

- 5. The international community as well as African governments must give incentives to small scale women farmers to enhance their transition to more ecologically sustainable practices to include credit, technology and guaranteed markets.**

**There must be measures to increase number of women in agricultural extension such as:**

- a) affirmative action on percentage of women to be enrolled in agricultural training programmes.**
- b) Outreach programmes by agricultural colleges and the ministries of agriculture in junior and senior high schools to encourage females to take up serious agriculture.**
- c) Mentoring of school children by female agricultural officers must be accepted as a programme.**
- d) Policy on posting of female extension staff ensuring that they are not separated from their spouses and children.**
- e) To ensure sustainable development at the small scale food processing level, females must be trained to carry out minor maintenance of agro-processing equipment in remote rural communities.**

**Measures to be taken to strengthen the link between women farmers and extension services/workers should include:**

- i) regular farmer field schools where farmers are taken through a complete training course and given certificates.**
- ii) Organization of regular open days where demonstrations on technologies are done and finally**
- iii) Strengthening of research extension liaison work by ensuring regular meetings and ensuring that farmers' problems are given immediate attention.**

**Thank you.**