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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Science and Technology Issues for Sustainable Development: Principles, Methodology and Strategy for Promoting the African Green Revolution

Addis Ababa, 16-18 November 2004

Opening Statement

by

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Chairperson,
Distinguished Experts,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Executive Secretary of ECA, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this Ad hoc Expert Group Meeting on Science and Technology Issues for Sustainable Development, with specific focus on the theme of "Principles, Methodology and Strategy for Promoting the African Green Revolution." Thank you for kindly accepting to allocate some of your precious time to come and share with us your expertise, experience and insights on the challenge of harnessing science and technology for sustainable development in Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Indeed, chief among the challenges of Africa's sustainable development is the harnessing of science and technology to increase significantly the productivity and competitiveness of the food and agricultural systems in the production, processing and delivery of products to meet the demand of domestic as well as international markets. In addressing this challenge, it is increasingly admitted that Africa must design and implement its own Green Revolution. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan made in 2003 and 2004 repeated calls to African countries in this regard. In response, we at ECA have initiated a series of activities to promote an African Green Revolution Initiative.

The pursuit of a Green Revolution in Africa, however, can only proceed from a full recognition of the complexity arising from the diversity of agro-ecological zones, farming systems and socio-cultural contexts of the continent. It is evident that different versions of Green Revolution must be designed to fit these different contexts. Yet, the design principles must be the same: to be sustainable, the African Green Revolution must be scientifically valid, economically viable, environmentally friendly and socially acceptable. It must be manageable by African farming communities.

Hence, workable designs must build on experiences, best practices and successes in Green Revolution systems with potential for application to Africa. They must proceed from best design principles, including how to discover the potentials, entry points, driving forces and leverage factors that may be used to drive African farming communities from subsistence farming to sustainable modernization of agriculture and rural transformation (SMART), food security, broad-based economic growth, employment and poverty reduction. They must show how to prime and tune up communities for the adoption and implementation of Green Revolution factors – hence creating SMART systems, SMART plans and SMART communities. Finally they must link these SMART systems to other players in the investment, market, technology, infrastructure, institutional and policy (TIIP) fields to fuel and sustain the whole Green Revolution system.

Distinguished Experts,

In a recent ECA Field Project on Identification and Assessment of African Green Revolution Indicators and Design, a glimpse of the above design principles was presented at a workshop held at Kampala, Uganda, in December 2003. An outline of the principles was briefly introduced to expert participants. In light of field observations of a farming, production and delivery system designed according to the principles, these experts called for replication of the pilot system, and for a full elucidation of the principles behind its design.

As part of its road map towards a Green Revolution in Africa, and in response to the increasing interest on the issue, the ECA has commissioned a Study on Principles, methodology and strategy for promoting the African Green Revolution: A design and training manual." This Manual is intended to offer a useful instrument in the design effort.

The main objective of this meeting is to elicit your advice and feedback on the principles, methodology and strategy for promoting an African Green Revolution. In this regard, you are kindly expected to:

1. Review and validate the Study on "Principles, methodology and strategy for promoting the African Green Revolution: A design and training manual;"
2. Reflect on the potential, readiness and prospects of Africa to design and implement a Green Revolution; and
3. Provide feedback, recommendations and advice on the way forward.

Furthermore, we are very pleased that your meeting gives us the opportunity of an Invited Lecture sponsored by the United Nations University Institute of Natural resources in Africa (UNU/INRA) under a long-standing partnership between our two organizations. The topic of this Lecture, **"Soil Fertility in Africa"** is very pertinent to the theme of this Experts Group Meeting. I am sure it will be a strong source of inspiration and guidance in your deliberations.

In conclusion,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me stress the importance we attach to your input, feed back and advice in this peer review exercise, which aims at validating the outcome of the Study at hand and at distilling out best practices that would allow Africa to move its Green Revolution forward. Make feasible recommendations that we at ECA and our Member States can implement in policy and program development to capacitate Africa to harness advances in science and technology for sustainable agricultural transformation. I know that we can count on your dedication to sustaining our collective action in this design effort and to mobilizing other stakeholders for the cause of a genuine African Green Revolution.

With those few words, I declare the Ad hoc Expert Group Meeting on Science and Technology Issues for Sustainable Development open.

Thank you.