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**Economic Commission for Africa
Commission économique pour l'Afrique**

**SECOND MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD ON
POPULATION, AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT FOR
THE FOOD SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION (FSSDD)
Addis-Ababa, 24-26 October 2000**

Opening Statement

By

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Director
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Development Division**

*Chairperson,
Distinguished Experts,
Members of the Advisory Board,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is indeed a great pleasure to welcome you to this meeting, the Second Meeting of the Advisory Board on the Food Security and Sustainable Development Programmes of the ECA. On behalf of the Executive Secretary and the Food Security and Sustainable Development Division, let me express my appreciation for your continuous commitment to assisting the Economic Commission for Africa in its endeavors to promote rapid social and economic development in Africa.

Our special thanks also go to those who are attending the meeting for the first time for accepting to bring their expertise to bear on the work of ECA.

As you are aware, Africa enters the 21st Century with immense, multidimensional development challenges. Average income is lower than it was in the 1960; and it is estimated that some 300 million Africans (almost 50 percent of the region's population) have to live on barely \$0.65 a day (in purchasing power parity terms), and this number is growing relentlessly. In fact, Africa is the only continent where the absolute number of poor and undernourished population will continue to grow for the next decade. Although the rural poor account for 80 per cent of the poor, urban poverty is also substantial, and appears to be on the increase.

As you are well aware, poverty is a major cause of environmental degradation. Poor rural dwellers are driven to exert greater pressure on land and other natural resources in their effort to eke out subsistence living. In time, environmental degradation can, and do influence to the persistence of high fertility rates. Lacking most other resources, the poor largely depend on child labor to increase productivity. Emphasis should, therefore, be placed on finding imaginative solutions to breaking a vicious circle of poverty that these population - environment - agriculture linkages have tended to create.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is indeed a sad fact that many development problems have now become largely confined to Africa. Among these are a lagging demographic transition, very low agricultural productivity, endemic diseases notably MALARIA and HIV/AIDS, unequal distribution of incomes, and unequal access to essential services. In addition, one African in five lives in countries with economies that have been severely disrupted by conflicts with attendant increases in the number of refugees and displaced persons.

It is a well known fact that all the UN Conferences and Summits of the 1990s have highlighted the elimination of poverty as the overriding objective of economic and social development. In this regard, the African situation is daunting. It is estimated that to reach the International Development Goal of reducing by half the incidence of severe poverty by 2015, Africa will require an annual economic growth rate of 7 percent or more. The annual rate of population growth will also need to be substantially reduced. Hence, Africa's development strategies should focus not only on economic growth, but also on improvement of overall well being which involves, in particular, investment in education and health services with special attention to the rural poor.

At the first meeting of the Advisory Board, some of these developmental issues were tabled. You had reviewed some of our programmes and an advocacy tool created to promote holistic development planning. The ECA through programmes in this Division seeks to promote incorporation of population and environment concerns into national plans to ensure food security and sustainable development in its member States.

Members present had also reviewed a major report, which is an elaboration of the population - agriculture - environment linkages. This report provides the rationale for the creation of a computer simulation model, the Population Environment Development Agriculture (PEDA) Model. This report, in its revised form, will be presented to you again during this meeting under a new title, "Linkages of Population, Environment and Agriculture in Africa's Food Security and Sustainable Development". The latest version of the PEDA model will also be demonstrated. The PEDA model, for the benefit of new members of the Advisory Board, is ECA's advocacy tool for awareness raising among Africa's policy-makers and relevant stakeholders.

Distinguished Colleagues,

To ensure that FSSDD benefits, as usual, from your expertise, we have organized our presentations and discussions in the next three days, in five main sessions. The First Session is designed to bring you up to date with our activities. A staff member will give brief accounts, for your information and comments, of various activities, which the Division undertook since the meeting of this Advisory Board last year. These activities include preparations for Earth Summit II, that is, evaluation of Agenda 21 in 2002, ten years after the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment

and Development (UNCED). Moreover, a new version of the PEDDA model has been prepared, together with several related publications. A Science and Technology website has also been developed.

During the Second Session, you will be invited to review the revised report, "Linkages of Population, Environment and Agriculture in Africa's Food Security and Sustainable Development". Other draft documents which will constitute the Division's outputs for this year and 2001 will also be presented so that we can receive your suggestions for their improvement.

During the Third Session, you will view a power-point presentation of the new website developed for the ECA Science and Technology Network (ESNET). Interested members will have the opportunity to access these web pages during the week.

Session Four will be devoted to a presentation of the new version of the PEDDA model. The PEDDA model will be demonstrated. Its Users' and Technical Manual, and various related advocacy booklets will be presented for your detailed review.

During the Fifth Session, you will be invited to make suggestions on critical emerging issues pertaining to food security and sustainable development in Africa in the 21st Century and what implications these may have on FSSDD's proposed Work Programme for the biennium, 2002-2003. You may also address other issues that you consider of importance to the programme of the Division.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude by expressing once again my appreciation to you for honoring our invitation and for your support to the work of the ECA in promoting food security and sustainable development in African countries. I wish you very fruitful deliberations.

I now have the honour and privilege to declare open the Second Meeting of the Advisory Board on Population, Agriculture and Environment.