

Statement from the African Women's Regional Organizations, 7th Session of the United Nations Commission on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, 2012

The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger elimination, development and current challenges.

Preamble:

RECOGNISING that according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, women, particularly rural and grassroots women are the backbone of the agricultural workforce, responsible for 60-80% of food production for both consumption and sale

CONCERNED by the high illiteracy rates among rural women, discriminatory legislation, social and cultural obstacles, and inadequate training and management skills hinder women's freedom of choice and mobility in the socio-economic context; and moreover that women's exclusion from relevant decision-making processes at community level and within political parties, public institutions and professional organizations has meant that the issues of most concern to women have been neglected.

Concerned also about the new phenomenon of land grabbing in the name of foreign investment, dispossessing rural and local populations, with serious consequences on livelihoods and more specifically on rural women

FURTHER CONCERNED that the burden of HIV/AIDS, conflicts and disasters like drought and famine of food, falls disproportionately on women, who are the primary food producers and consumers, leading to persistent depletion, malnutrition and in extreme cases, destitution and UNDERSCORING that the persistent patriarchal social norms, gender insensitive legislations and limited political will for rural women's empowerment reduce them to high levels of discrimination and vulnerability to food insecurity, disease, and violation of their human rights

WE HEREBY CALL ON:

African Leaders and Governments to:

Comply and fully implement CEDAW and the Protocol to the Rights of Women in Africa, as a fundamental principle for eliminating the prevailing disparities between women and men and promote and protect women's human rights,

Institute measures to enforce affirmative action or policies geared towards promotion of women's participation in decision making and in agricultural cooperatives and trade and value chains in rural areas

Prioritize rural women and local communities' social security programmes with emphasis on rural women, especially and vulnerable victims of disasters and other crises and other vulnerable

Development partners to:

... trade agreements and investments that will increase recognition of more jobs and improve work conditions for rural women.

... and some up access. ... and further research on rural women's development in Africa, including factors responsible for women's marginalisation in economic development, to encourage policy changes based on reliable, evidence based studies;

Civil Society Organizations to:

... allocation and expenditure on agriculture and other sectors to ensure integrated gender responsiveness and guard against corruption;

... increase partnership among rural women, civil society organizations and science and technology institutions to guarantee gender equality and sustainable development in Africa.