

## Speaking Points Switzerland

First of all, it should be noted that it is difficult to summarize lessons learnt and challenges for the entire continent Africa, since there is not only one Africa, but very different regions and countries in Africa which all have their own singular history, context, barriers and challenges.

Switzerland's attempt to review our activities and policy in development cooperation in Africa can be found in our national report.

(<http://www.un.org/esa/agenda21/natlinfo/countr/swiss/africa.pdf>)

We would like to commend the Secretariat of the Economic Commission for Europe for the document it published in preparation of today's discussion. We have following comments to the different chapters of the report:

### **I. Introduction:**

- The report adequately describes the importance of agriculture for food security and poverty alleviation through income generation across Africa, as well as the threat posed by climate change.
- This report could give more emphasis to the *increased roles and burden for women* in agriculture especially in Africa – feminization of agriculture. This was also presented by Ms. Hirsba from the Women's major group. The introduction should also refer to the landmark *World Development Report 2008* on Agriculture which underlines the importance of investments in agriculture in African countries for poverty reduction and food security.
- The report places little emphasis on challenges to agriculture which emerge from *conflict*. The *potential risks of massive production of agrofuels* for land and water access of poorer small farmers are not mentioned, similarly existing and continuing threats such as *malaria, AIDS/HIV* are not covered adequately although continue to be of utmost importance.

### **II: Monitoring progress against commitments**

#### **A. Extending the area under sustainable land management and reliable water control**

- Extending the area under sustainable land management and reliable water control is indeed a crucial aspect. However, some African countries tend to give emphasis to large irrigation schemes with uncertain effects on downstream communities and on access of smallholders to land and water. Ambiguous past experience by large scale irrigation schemes in Africa - as documented by the World Bank and others - must be taken into account more adequately.
- Large scale investments must go along with increased capacities to turn these investments into productive actions.

#### **B. Improving infrastructure and trade-related capacities for improved market access**

Sustainable energy systems require careful embedment in overall development and in particular in productive economic branches. In many instances decentralized energy production and supply systems maybe more pro-poor than large energy projects.

#### **C. Increasing food supply and reducing hunger**

Switzerland considers institutional and human capacities to be the overriding factors which hamper agricultural development in Africa. This includes the weakness of innovation systems (including research and extension) but also weak or biased policy making. Increasing produc-

tivity through agricultural education, research and extension is crucial. However, given the existing and probably increasing volatility of climate in Africa food security does not depend solely on production. Decentralized storage capacity, access to markets and diversified sources of income are very important. More emphasis should be put on these interlinkages and also on the interlinkage between health and agriculture.

**D. Agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption**

The document rightly points on progress in the area of agricultural research mainly due to the technological strength of the Consultative Group of International Agriculture Research (CGIAR) and its partners. We underline the importance of emerging and strengthening regional mechanisms and organizations such as the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the West and Central African council for agricultural research and development (CORAF), the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) which helps to pool resources.