

Chairman, distinguished delegates.

The NGO statement is in connection to presentations delivered yesterday, this morning and this afternoon.

Tourism, Mr. Chairman is good but without careful controls, some problems do occur. For example, some tourists come to Africa to have access to traditional knowledge about plants use. They use this knowledge and obtain patents on substances from these Africa plants, without sharing the benefits with the local communities. We have examples of baobab and yellow yam from West Africa, Iboga in Central Africa, Hoodia in South Africa.

Land is the single most dominant asset for African households. It is a key social and economic asset, crucial for cultural identity, participation in decision-making and provision of shelter. The commodification of lands has led to further marginalisation of women as well as pastoralists, pushing them out of the cities and in some cases into the slums. Forceful evictions still remain a problem on the continent and women bear the brunt of those dislocations. Women's rights to land is therefore critical for their social status, economic well – being and empowerment.

Drought and desertification are emergency issues and must be treated as such. Climate change is a major contributor to distorted weather patterns and increasing incidents of drought in Africa. Droughts have been one important cause of crop failures, of livestock deaths, and of food shortages in Africa. Pastoralists are heavily impacted and have to search over larger areas for grazing and water for their animals thus risking serious land conflicts.

Investment in renewable energy is one way of combating the menace of desertification. Other efforts would include integrating indigenous knowledge systems in land and natural resource management systems and linking these actions in rural areas, strengthening and supporting local coping mechanisms, and engaging in research and development activities in collaboration with local people with clear gender mainstreaming.

The issue of desertification has so far been relatively ignored and seen in isolation by governments, donors, and civil society. Investments in drylands activities such as water and land management, pastoralist development initiatives, and protection of savannah ecosystems have been low and scattered and thus require important awareness-raising and information work.

Africa does not need GMOs to solve her food problems. Current agricultural knowledge, science and technology emphasizes the role of agro ecological farming methods and sustainable practices that protect biodiversity and make agriculture more resilient and adaptive as it is needed in terms of climate change. The big problem in Africa is rural infrastructure for access to farms and farm products and markets. We bear in mind that in countries with food deficits there are sometimes surpluses in remote areas of the same countries.

AGRA's intentions are good but the strategies and means of delivery are suspect. To all intent and purposes, the agenda of AGRA and the IITA coincide and in the matter of using GMOs as a solution to the hunger on the African continent we make bold to say that they are both wrong.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, it must be remembered that the challenges of achieving sustainable development in and for Africa is not merely a technical one, but an ethical one as well. Clear and decisive moral leadership is also required.