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8 MARCH 2012

**STATEMENT BY THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN
AFRICA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

On behalf of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and in my capacity as Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, I wish all African women an excellent celebration on March 8.

The theme chosen for this year is: **“the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges”**.

At the global level, more than one-third of the female workforce is engaged in agriculture, either as subsistence farmers or as salaried workers. However, to date, very little attention has been paid to the role played by rural women, and they continue to suffer from several forms of discrimination including limited access to land and resources that may improve their living conditions. Such forms of discrimination are more perceptible in Africa, in spite of the essential role that rural women play in combating hunger and preserving food security in grassroots communities.

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women chose the above theme in conformity with its 2010-2014 programme of work as the priority theme for its 56th Session in 2012. I hope that the recommendations formulated during the said session will be taken into consideration by the State Parties to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) in order to strengthen the laws, policies and plans of action which they adopted relating to the empowerment of rural women.

Moreover, in accordance with Article 19 of the Maputo Protocol, State Parties have to take all appropriate measures to, among others, promote women's access to and control over productive resources such as land and guarantee their right to property.

In addition, State Parties have to devote additional financial resources to local and national programmes aimed at eliminating discrimination against women, in particular at the rural level, mainly in the sphere of education, promoting literacy and reproductive health.

The State Parties also have to ensure that rural women have greater access to credit, training, skills development and extension services in order to reduce the level of poverty among women.

Long live the International Women's Day!

Long live the African woman in her tireless efforts for the development of the Continent!

Banjul, 6 March 2012

The Special Rapporteur