

Africa Industrialization Day 2014

24 November 2014

THEME: “Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID): African Agro Industry for Food Security”

Speech by Mr. LI Yong, Director General of the
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

Since 1990, UNIDO in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union Commission, has organized the Africa Industrialization Day commemorations with the continued support of the United Nations family, the Regional Economic Commissions, government officials, representatives of civil society, and an increasing participation of the private sector.

As you may know, the agricultural sector remains the backbone of many African economies and the source of income for over sixty percent of the population. Seventy five percent of the Sub-Saharan population lives in rural areas, depending on small scale agriculture for subsistence.

Subsequently, the 2008 global financial crisis directly endangered these vulnerable communities, causing the prices of major food commodities to reach their highest level in 30 years, and consequently generating increased food insecurity across the continent.

Despite the recent economic recovery, the picture is still bleak.

Transportation costs are high, while commercial exchanges and official development assistance flows remain low, hindering the continent's competitiveness and productivity. In fact, Africa's agricultural potential remains critically hampered by the lack of access to modern technologies, to local and regional markets, and to appropriate financial schemes and institutional support. Furthermore, it is expected that by 2050 Africa will be home to more than two billion people. The growing population poses a continuous challenge to the continent in balancing an increasing demand for food which has no correlation with production capacities.

Within the post-2015 development agenda framework, UNIDO reaffirmed its absolute commitment to support its Member States in boosting their agriculture-based industries through its mandate of Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID), as enshrined in the Lima Declaration. Moreover, UNIDO stands as a key global partner in the field of agro-industrial development and food security through its technical assistance and the design of optimized bankable projects, respectful of the environment. By promoting agro-processing value chains, UNIDO supports and enhances local commodity transformation capacities and fosters job creation in vulnerable communities, especially targeting youth and women. In addition, the Organization is striving to strengthen the legal and regulatory frameworks through the promotion of quality standards and the development of compliance infrastructure. As such, we aim at providing our member states with the enabling environment to significantly reinforce their trade capacity while increasing food security.

As the Director General of UNIDO, I believe that ISID can lay the basis of a strong agro-industrial and agri-business sector that can catalyze the structural, economic and social transformations required to lift vulnerable communities from their precarious conditions. We are gathered today to promote ISID as a critical tool towards developing African Agro-industries for Food security.

I wish you all an excellent celebration of the Africa Industrialization Day 2014.

Thank you for your attention.