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**Statement  
of  
The African Union Commission  
at  
The 56<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission  
on the Status of Women**

by

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of the CSW**

**New York  
USA**

**5 March 2012**

H. E. Chairperson of the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSW

H. E. Madame Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director and Under-Secretary,  
General of United Nations

Honourable Ministers

Excellencies, Ambassadors

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of H.E. the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Jean Ping, I have the honour to make a statement at the 56<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Status of Women in New York, on the theme: **Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and their Role in Development and Hierarchy, Education, Development and Current Challenges**

Let me also join earlier speakers by congratulating the Chairperson and members of the Bureau for their elections and the efficient way in which they are conducting their meeting. The AU Commission also wishes to echo itself to statements made by Algeria on behalf of the Africa Group and Tunisia on behalf of the Africa Group.

On the outset, rural women constitute more than half of the 50% of Africa's 80% rural population. Some 60% of the continent's population are women, with little or no access to basic and essential services. We also recognize those urban poor women who also constitute a large number of citizens living in urban slums, sometimes in same conditions as the rural women. The reason why rural women continue to experience poverty and under development are all known and well researched and yet little progress has been made.

## Ladies and Gentlemen

Most statements from African member states have indeed made it clear that have been taken at the national level to fight these challenges. The African Union Statement will try to demonstrated some (not all) measures that have been taken at the regional level by the Union to recognize the crucial role of rural women who continue to produce and feed the entire continent, and desire their under privileged conditions.

1. The African Union chose the International Rural Women's Day (15<sup>th</sup> October 2010) to launch African Women's Decade 2010-2020 in Nairobi, Kenya. This move was instrumental in giving prominence to African Rural Women, who constituted 60% of the participants to the launch
2. The Theme chosen for the African Women's Decade is "Gender and Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" which again emphasizes that during the next 10 years, the African continent will be laying special attention to rural women's needs
3. The theme for the 56<sup>th</sup> CSW which is focuses on rural women's contribution to development, their Role in fighting poverty and hunger, Eradication of poverty, with the African Women's Decade theme for 2012, which is "Agriculture and Food Security",
4. In recognizing and appreciating the synergy between the 56<sup>th</sup> Theme of the CSW and the theme for the African Women's Decade for 2012, the Commission of the African Union in collaboration with the International Labor Organization (ILO) Regional Office in Addis Ababa organized a Ministerial Dialogue on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2010 between Ministers of Labor, Ministers of Gender, Women's Affairs and Rural women to

discourse on these two themes, your experiences, on such issues and  
way forward in achieving the African Women Decade implementation

### Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen

The synergy demonstrated by the African Women's Decade themes for 2012  
and the theme chosen for 56<sup>th</sup> CSW, therefore provides yet another entry  
point for United Nations Agencies led by UN Women to engage African African  
continent and support the implementation of the Decade for the benefit of  
African Women in general and in particular

### Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen

You will recall that at the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the CSW, the Commission shared the  
efforts it is making to support rural women's food, though the Fund for  
African Women using its method of one theme per year, I would  
to report that the Commission received 105 rural projects under the 2011  
Theme which was Women's Health, Maternal, Infant and Child Nutrition  
these projects were approved for funding. It was to be noted that the  
criteria used was biased to support rural projects and those projects that were  
not funded were not able to demonstrate that they were truly rural. In 2012, a  
similar Call will be made on the Theme of Agriculture and Food Security. The  
Commission wishes to encourage rural women to apply all of its member  
states to facilitate this process.

### Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen

In conclusion, the Commission invites delegates to visit the African  
Women's decade website at [www.africanwomensdecade.org](http://www.africanwomensdecade.org)  
documents where each of the 10 Decade Themes have been elaborated.

I thank you for your kind attention.