

**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN 56<sup>TH</sup> SESSION**  
**27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY– 9<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2012**  
**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY SISTER ADWOA SAKYI, IUF-EI-PSI-ITUC**

Distinguished Chairperson and delegates. I speak on behalf of our trade union coalition: ITUC, PSI and EI (as well IUF) who together represent 70 million women workers world-wide, of whom 7 million are rural women workers. The economic empowerment of rural women workers requires adequate policies and action. Like millions of rural women have the longest working day - despite being constrained by lack of access to productive resources, public goods and services, markets and land tenure rights needed to reach their productive potential. According to the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), rural poverty is deeply rooted in the imbalance between what women do and what they have.

A Majority of rural women workers are in the agriculture industry, yet public investment agriculture in sub-Sahara Africa constitutes only 4 percent. Aside from their lack of capital, these rural women workers are too frequently deprived of basic human rights, including the right to freedom of association; the right to bargain collectively for better working conditions; the right to live and work free from violence; the right to medical care and necessary social services; the right to social protection; and the right to an adequate standard of living. Chair, this list is simply too long.

Poor Occupational Health and Safety standards also remain a major concern with women paying for woeful standards with their health and sometimes their lives.

We, as trade unions, together with women working in rural areas, emphasise the need for decent work including access to social protection, public services such as health, clean water, sanitation, energy and quality education.

The global trade union movement calls on Member States at this 56<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women to:

- i. Ensure that the concept of decent work and the creation of decent jobs are fully incorporated into rural development strategies and strengthen rural labour inspection
- ii. Invest in building the necessary social infrastructure, including health, education, social care, water, sanitation, energy, transportation and other social protection mechanisms, in order to ensure sustainable economic and social development in rural areas
- iii. Review, extend and effectively implement national legislation that covers all rural women workers, including agricultural workers, and ratify and implement ILO Conventions<sup>1</sup>
- iv. Ensure that gender-responsive budgeting, gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive employment policies are systematically integrated into the design and the implementation of rural development policies, programmes and budgets

v. Ensure the provision of public quality education free of charge and with adequate facilities, qualified teachers, good sanitation and safe transportation, in order to increase the enrolment and retention of girls in schools and reduce child labour. Incentives for families to send their girls to school, gender-sensitive relevant curricula and textbooks, opportunities for further education and training, and access and entry to the labour market make a difference

vi. Provide incentives for qualified female teachers and health professionals to work in rural and isolated areas and introduce measures to ensure their safety

vii. Develop and combine rural vocational educational training and other opportunities and qualifications with employment, poverty reduction and food security

viii. Establish consultative processes that call for social dialogue with trade unions; create opportunities for rural women to participate fully and effectively in decision-making processes, including development planning. These are minimum requirements. In this respect, we draw Member States' attention to key Conventions of the International Labour Organisation. We, as trade unionists recognise that rural women are powerful and effective catalysts for sustainable development and attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as agents against hunger and poverty.

Truly if we want to eradicate hunger and poverty, facilitate development and be able to meet current global challenges, then the world has no choice but to solidify the foundations of rural women. Because it is on their shoulders that we shall achieve our goals of making the world free of hunger and poverty.

**Thank you very much.**

A Majority of rural women workers are in the agriculture industry, yet public investment agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa constitutes only 4 percent. Aside from their lack of capital, these rural women workers are longest working day - despite being constrained by lack of access to adequate policies and action. Like millions of rural women have the workers. The economic empowerment of rural women workers requires million women workers world-wide, of whom 7 million are rural women union coalition: ITUC, PSI and EI (as well IUF) who together represent 70 Distinguished Chairperson and delegates. I speak on behalf of our trade