



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
25 August 2005

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African Governments Unanimously Adopt Abuja Declaration On Sustainable Fisheries, Aquaculture

H.E. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President of Nigeria, concluded a four-day NEPAD-Fish for All Summit by announcing adoption of the Abuja Declaration on Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa at the Secretariat of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The Declaration was agreed at an assembly of high-level government leaders that included the Vice President of The Gambia, Ministers of Fisheries from Mozambique, Ghana, The Gambia, Niger, Malawi, Egypt, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Kenya, and South Africa, ambassadors and technical delegates.

The Declaration endorses an Action Plan completed during technical meetings August 22-24 involving 100 experts from across the continent at the Fish for All summit. The Action Plan is based on a five point strategy that focuses on supporting capture fisheries, developing aquaculture, improving fish market chains, increasing benefits from fish trade and supporting decision makers with information.

Said President Obasanjo: "If Africa's per capita consumption of fish is just to be kept at its present level, though grossly low and unacceptable, then fish production must be increased by over 250 percent by 2015. This unhealthy situation calls for urgent action and indeed poses a great challenge to all of us."

African fish and fishery products also have an annual export value of US\$2.7 billion, he noted, "yet these benefits are at risk as the exploitation of African natural fish stocks is reaching its limits and aquaculture production has not realised its full potential."

Minister of Agriculture for Nigeria, Mallan Adamu Bello commended the WorldFish Center for promoting the idea of a Fish for All Summit that would go a long way to help Africa boost its food production if the Abuja Declaration is implemented.

Dr. Stephen Hall, Director General of the WorldFish Center, who also represented Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, Chairman of the Fish for All Global Steering Committee, stated that: "An investment of \$30 million in the recently launched NEPAD-WorldFish Program for Sustainable African Aquaculture alone could increase Africa's aquaculture production by 10%

annually to about 3 million tons over the next 15 years, worth some US\$1-2 billion. This could create employment for up to 5 million persons by 2020, and provide food security for millions more. It could also generate exports to the value of US\$50-100 million annually by 2020. Is that not a good return on investment?" Added Dr. Hall: "Looking at the current situation you could argue that Africa missed 'the green revolution'. Let's make sure we catch up on that one but also make sure we don't miss the 'blue' one".

Other key speakers at the Summit were Professor Firmino Mucavele, Chief Executive NEPAD Secretariat, Dr. Ichiro Nomura, Assistant-Director General, FAO Fisheries Department, and Dr. Warren Evans, Director (Environment), World Bank.

WorldFish Center

The WorldFish Center (www.worldfishcenter.org) is an international scientific research organization supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). Its mission is to reduce poverty and hunger by improving fisheries and aquaculture. Most of its work is carried out in developing countries.