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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by the Comité français pour l'Afrique du Sud, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Combating poverty in rural areas far removed from major cities

The fight against poverty is being waged against the backcloth of a growing demographic imbalance between major urban centres, which include growing inner cities, on the one hand, and often neglected and increasingly sparsely populated rural areas on the other.

The enormous size of these urban centres, on all continents, often with populations of several million, creates tremendous social, economic and environmental challenges relating to housing conditions, education, access to health care, sanitation and drinking water — challenges which are increasingly difficult to resolve.

Sustainable development goals can only be met by exclusively following a growth model that is based on that of the world's major cities.

Careful thought must be given as to how to rehabilitate areas which are far removed from major urban centres and thus to provide new opportunities for sustainable development across all territories. A new balance must be struck through the adoption of various actions, including:

- (a) Regulation of the market for the sale of arable land in order to safeguard family or community farming and to promote efforts to combat land desertification;
- (b) Development of family farming by providing incentives to small and medium-sized farms, in particular through the use of interest-free loans or loans with subsidized interest rates;
- (c) Establishment in all deprived rural areas of centres for training in modern farming techniques;
- (d) Assistance to small and medium-sized artisanal and commercial enterprises connected with family farms in order to help them to acquire the tools and goods they need for their operation;
- (e) Strengthening the network of local hospitals and clinics;
- (f) Setting up voluntary cooperatives of family farms, to help support the sale of agricultural goods at fair prices;
- (g) Establishment of cooperative banks, in which farmers are members, which receive the deposits and savings of the farmers and grant them loans;
- (h) Public investment in the maintenance of local transport networks;
- (g) Promoting the role of local associations, particularly in the areas of education, sports and artistic and cultural activities.

The impact of such measures should be regularly evaluated in order that the necessary balance between rural areas and major urban centres can be restored as soon as possible.