



INTERNATIONAL COFFEE ORGANIZATION  
ORGANIZACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DEL CAFÉ  
ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO CAFÉ  
ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE DU CAFÉ

ICC 110-8

7 March 2013  
Original: English

E

International Coffee Council  
110<sup>th</sup> Session  
4 – 8 March 2013  
London, United Kingdom

**Statement by the Chairperson of the  
InterAfrican Coffee Organisation (IACO)  
to the 110<sup>th</sup> Session of the  
International Coffee Council**

## **Background**

The attached document contains a statement by the Chairperson of the InterAfrican Coffee Organisation presented during the 110th Session of the International Coffee Council.

## **Action**

The Council is invited to take note of this document.

**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE  
INTERAFRICAN COFFEE ORGANISATION (IACO)  
TO THE 110<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COFFEE COUNCIL**

The Chairperson of the International Coffee Council for 2012/13,  
Your Excellency the Executive Director of the ICO,  
Distinguished Council Members of the ICO,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is a pleasure for me to be with you here today; as a representative of the recently elected Chairperson for the 2012/2013 coffee year during the 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Assembly held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in November, 2012, Madame Essossimna Legzim-Balouki, the Minister of Commerce and Private Sector Promotion, Togo, and therefore taking the platform today as the spokesperson for the African Producers Group. I also wish to thank you, Mr Executive Director, for finding the time to come and meet with African producers, which you have so far done two times this year – in Libreville in January and in Kampala in February. On both occasions, these were meetings organized by private sector organisations – African and Malagasy Robusta Coffee Agency (AMRCA) and the African Fine Coffees Association (AFCA), respectively. It is an indication that the ICO is taking Africa seriously, given that the private sector is now an important partner with Governments in Africa in the process of revitalization of the coffee sector. Of course I know that you also had important discussions with government officials in each of these countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the story of African coffee is well known to all of us. Africa had generally declined, in its influence in the global coffee dynamics, following the liberalization of the sector in our respective countries, which came on the heels of the collapse of the ICO quota system. In many countries, owing to the pursuit of policies of structural adjustment, and the declining role of governments in the support to the coffee sector, farmers' earnings plummeted as a result of poor prices, resulting in the abandonment of coffee farms. Subsequently, production declined and quality worsened.

Thus, while in 1970 Africa contributed about 32% of global coffee production, today the continent only produces about 12%. The ramifications of these developments to us as producers, and as sovereign states, have been devastating, especially for countries that derived significant foreign earnings from coffee exports. In many instances, reduced foreign exchange negatively affected national development programmes.

Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, history is important in our lives to the extent that it helps us to remember where we are coming from and provides the basis for us to plan the way forward. For me therefore, Africa's bleak coffee history must rather now chart a better way forward for African coffee, and not otherwise.

I would like to declare to you that African coffee is in a period of renaissance, and soon it will become evident when the results hit the market, in the form of increased production and excellent quality. This is in response to the need for good quality African coffee. We have also decided to begin to focus our attention on what our strengths and opportunities are and to explore them to our advantage.

Given the reality of a bullish coffee market, with global demand growing at an average of 3% per annum, and coffee prices that have sent a positive signal to the producers, we have seen the beginning of a new day for African coffee. Noting that demand for coffee is growing, while the supply of quality coffee that meets the expectations of consumers is increasingly insufficient, we want to rise up to the challenge. Africa has a large pool of youthful energetic labour, and we will tap into this great resource, while at the same time empowering the women who form the majority of the work-force in the sector. We are also giving serious attention to research and extension services to the farmers, with an end in mind.

Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am glad to report that after years of strife and civil wars, coffee production in West and Central Africa is starting to recover with production figures going up in countries like Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Cameroon, while in southern Africa there is a serious programme of restoration of Angola's coffee production capacity. In the highlands and lakes regions of eastern Africa, there are positive results being seen in Ethiopia, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, where farmers are making positive responses to market signals.

There is evidence of increased productivity and improved quality, in the above noted countries, and this is something that we would like to encourage throughout the entire Africa region. We have been told that roasters are seeking an additional 20 million bags by 2020, in order to meet the increased demand, and for us the starting point is "how to get beyond where we were before?" Thus, we are now focused on the 20 million bags by 2020 – not just by planting new land, but from increased productivity while also focusing on sustainability.

We would also like to see the coffee sector contributing positively to attaining the Millennium Development Goal 1 (MDG1), which targets to eradicate extreme poverty and

hunger. This is relevant in IACO's pursuit of increased employment in the sector and increased earnings to the producers. While it aims to address the issue of poverty among coffee farming communities, in Africa now we want to put special focus on the women and youth, who form the majority in these communities. This approach is in line with a key Target of MDG1, which aims to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people.

Our various governments have made commitments to address the constraints in our respective coffee industries. Additionally, through our regional organisation – the InterAfrican Coffee Organisation (IACO) – an inter-governmental organisation that was formed in December 1960, we are developing new programmes and initiatives that will propel the coffee sector into new heights. We are exploring various opportunities and partnerships that can benefit our growers, while also addressing various constraints in the coffee value chain, so that we can put more money in the farmers' pockets.

Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, at IACO, we are now in the process of developing a new strategic plan, and we would like to have a common policy direction with regard to coffee on the continent, and to rally our resources in the most efficient and productive manner. Recognizing some of the policy constraints we have, we will have IACO's premier Coffee Symposium, including a high level African Policy Forum focusing on coffee, in Lomé, Togo, 18-19 November 2013, where both public and private sector players will sit together, review the situation and discuss the way forward. I take this opportunity to extend our invitation to you all. Please mark it in your diaries.

My word to all our partners, present and future, is to thank you for your support, in all the various ways, and we look forward to building on these partnerships for the betterment of our coffee industry in Africa.

Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.