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**Statement by Madame Gertrude Zouta,
Minister of Trade, Industry, Crafts and Small-
and Medium-size Enterprises in the Central
African Republic to the 112th Session of
the International Coffee Council
on 7 March 2014**

Mr Chairman,
Executive Director,
Distinguished Delegates,

As this is the first time I am attending an International Coffee Council Session, I would like, on behalf of my delegation, to thank Members of the Organization and the Secretariat for the work they have undertaken, as well as for all the efforts made to seek solutions designed to promote a sustainable coffee economy in our respective countries and the improvement of living standards in developing countries by:

- developing and seeking financing for projects benefiting the world economy;
- promoting coffee quality;
- developing consumption and coffee markets;
- encouraging the development of strategies designed to strengthen the capacity of local communities and small farmers; and
- developing training and information programmes for tools designed to facilitate the transfer of appropriate technologies.

As you know, my country, namely the Central African Republic (CAR), has been living through a painful period in its history, a crisis caused by violent and unprecedented recent events; during this period many infrastructures (which were already insufficient), were destroyed. As a result, the country must be rebuilt.

For this reason, I wish to make an urgent appeal, a *cri de coeur* from the bottom of my heart, which is addressed both to this Council and to the international community as a whole, to support our national strategies for the recovery of our agriculture, especially the coffee sector, through the intermediary of the relevant cooperation mechanisms.

The Central African Republic has great potential for increasing its domestic coffee consumption.

Consumption sometimes exceeds production. In order to meet local demand, women roast coffee manually, in an old fashion way, to sell ground coffee in the local markets; the Chief Economist of the International Coffee Organization (ICO) emphasized this aspect in his report on a visit to my country in November 2012 in the context of the support provided by the ICO for preparing a sustainable coffee growing project.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Members of the Organization who approved this project during the 110th Session of the Council in March 2013. I count on your support and on the initiatives of the Secretariat to ensure that this project secures the financing required for the successful recovery of the coffee economy in our country, since coffee farming is essential for the eradication of poverty, one of the UN Millennium Development Goals. Youths who have resorted to violence can be reintegrated into agricultural and livestock activities since many of them come from rural areas. I am asking for the solidarity of ICO Members in this matter.

Thank you.