

The Executive Director, Mr. Néstor Osorio, was invited to address the 46th Annual General Assembly of the InterAfrican Coffee Organization (IACO) held at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia from 21 to 23 November 2006.

The event was chaired by H.E. Mrs. Tadelech Haile Mikael, Ambassador of Ethiopia to France. In his opening speech, Mr. Osorio thanked the Government of Ethiopia and IACO Members for their support and positive contribution to the work of the International Coffee Organization. As an instrument of regional cooperation on coffee, IACO had represented African interests at crucial times in the life of the ICO. He appealed for strong and positive involvement of African coffee producing countries in discussions on the future of the International Coffee Agreement 2001. Subsequently, Mr. Osorio, together with Mr. Saint-Cyr Djikalou, Chairman of the Working Group on the future of the Agreement, held a special session to explain to interested participants the procedures to be followed when the Working Group first meets in London from 22 – 26 January 2007.

Referring to recent developments of the coffee market, Mr. Osorio informed African stakeholders that fundamental factors provided reasons to believe that the current levels of prices could be maintained. However, he urged them to implement careful supply policies and to consider increasing domestic consumption in order to build on this. In this respect, he invited the African coffee community to invest in improving quality as a means of becoming more competitive and increasing revenue. At the end of his intervention Mr. Osorio underlined the objectives and mission of the ICO as an instrument of cooperation between consumers and producers, which was particularly geared to assist and empower coffee producing countries. He noted that the ICO provided assistance for developing and implementing coffee development projects in producing countries with financial support from the Common Fund for Commodities. Over the past ten years, a close working relationship between the ICO and the CFC had shown positive results with 25 projects totalling US\$72 million approved and funded mainly by the CFC. African coffee producing countries had benefited from 18 out of these 25 projects, totalling US\$52 million.

The opening ceremony was held in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia, H.E. Mr. Addisu Legesse. The 46th General Assembly of IACO noted the participation of the Republic of Liberia for the first time in 17 years. A regional workshop on African coffee production chaired by Mr. Saint-Cyr Djikalou, was held on 20 November prior to the General Assembly.