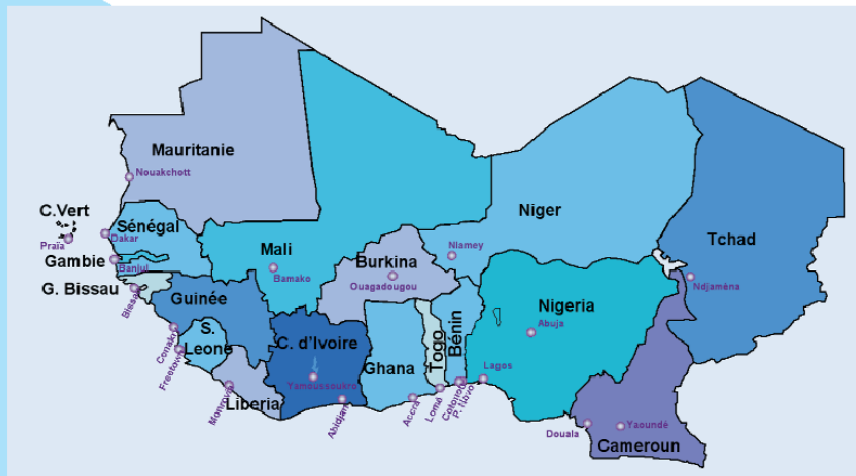


STATEMENT

“South-South Cooperation in Sustainable Shrimp Farming Development in West Africa”

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Introduction

Minister Touré, Ambassador Lefort, Distinguished participants from Asia, East Africa and West Africa, Dear colleagues and friends, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you here this morning to the Regional Roundtable on Exploring Opportunities in Sustainable Shrimp Farming; Focusing on South-South Cooperation, organised by the Sahel and West Africa Club. We would like to especially thank the Guinean Government, especially the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture under the leadership of Minister Touré, for their close collaboration, and from our Asian partner NACA in Thailand with the active participation of Mr. Mike Phillips.

I will present my remarks this morning in the following order:

- The Sahel and West Africa Club's history, mission, objectives and work areas;
 - Our perception of the region;
 - Linking economic development with sustainable development in aquaculture;
- and, in conclusion,
- The importance of South-South cooperation and public-private partnerships.

First, let me share a few words on the Sahel and West Africa Club and our perception of the region.

About the Sahel and West Africa Club

In the mid-1970s, within the context of severe drought, several Member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the organization to which the Club is attached, in partnership with Sahelian countries, created the *Club of Friends of the Sahel*. The aim was to establish a forum for the international community to discuss and encourage strong support for the region. In 2001, our governing board decided to expand the Club's geographic coverage to encompass the 15 ECOWAS member countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo), plus Mauritania, Chad and Cameroon. The Club then became the Sahel and West Africa Club.

Taking into account the evolutions of the region over the last 30 years and the challenges they present for the region's future while actively responding to the demands expressed by our partners in the region, the Club has undertaken new issues. Today, our work covers four areas:

- Medium- and Long-Term Development Perspectives;
- Agriculture Transformation and Rural Development;
- Local Development and the Process of Regional Integration;
- Governance, Conflict Dynamics, Peace and Security.

Within the framework of our activities, our main objectives are to:

- Help **identify strategic issues concerning medium- and long-term development** in West Africa;
- Contribute to **mobilizing and strengthening African capacities within a network approach**;
- Support **initiatives and efforts by Africans advancing long-term development solutions** in the region;
- **Facilitate exchanges between regional actors and OECD Member** countries;
- **Promote constructive debates** that lead to innovative decisions within and outside the region aimed at building a better future for the region.

The Club works in partnership with West African networks and institutions representing governments, private sector, and all of civil society in their diversity. It works in close collaboration with development partners of West Africa as well as international organisations; at the continental level, with the African Union, the NEPAD and the AfDB; at the regional level with ECOWAS, UNOWA, WAEMU, the CILSS as well as organisations such as ROPPA (regional network of local agricultural producers) and ENDA.

Our perception of the region

West Africa has experienced significant change over the last four decades and should not be perceived as a stagnant region but rather as a region **in constant evolution**.

Our heightened focus on mapping out long-term development perspectives, most recently in collaboration with ECOWAS, has provided a retrospective look at the region that shows over the last decades there have been significant social, cultural, institutional and political changes. To cite just a few: new modes of governance; a shift from a single-party to a multi-party system; expansion of the employment-generating informal sector; macro-economic and structural adjustments; economic liberalization; changes in the configuration and role of the media; emergence of civil society's role within its professional or community-based representative organisations; evolution of women's rights in society and their changing role in public affairs; higher priority for local development and the regional integration process.

Today, the importance of these challenges is exacerbated by the very **high percentage of youth under 20 years of age (over 55% of the population)**. No other region in the world has undergone such transformations in such a short period of time. It took Europe over 200 years!

For the Club and its partners, the vital question is: **“Where and how are the approximately 430 million West Africans going to live by the year 2020?”** This means that there will be an increase of over 100 million inhabitants than there are today. This demographic growth will be felt in the predominance of youth seeking employment; an

expanding local economy; increased urbanization; pressure on land, natural resources and food security; socioeconomic infrastructure needs; heightened migratory movements; and a restructuring of rural livelihoods and some cultural traditions. Many of these issues will be the source of tensions and conflicts to which societies, governments, and international partners will need to respond in the short-term.

While insisting on the dynamics of change and **West Africa's capacity to adapt**, the purpose here is not to say that "everything is going well". These changes have been impeded by problems of public and private governance; threats to human security; unsuccessful national *and international* strategies and policies; new pandemics such as HIV-AIDS, as well as the "old" ones, such as polio, malaria, cholera, and women's health. These tremendous upheavals have created political and social tensions but at the same time we see **an opening up and reconfiguration of West African public and private spaces, creating new opportunities for private sector, in partnership with government, to become the real drivers of development.**

As regional markets rapidly become denser and local economic areas increasingly connect up across borders, our understanding of the flow of goods, people, information and services in West Africa needs to increase. The Club is helping to regroup regional data and has begun mapping these dynamics in the frame work of a Regional ATLAS undertaken with ECOWAS. Knowledge is only one step, however. Leadership and political will is required from the public sector and financial institutions, including private investors, to support regional cooperation for investments in priority areas such as infrastructure. As a pillar of regional development, good roads and communication lines are essential means for moving goods from field to market, or from pond to plate as the case may be.

Linking economic development with sustainable development

Over the last four decades, policies for economic growth have focused on developing West Africa's valuable natural resources, mainly for export, and yet the linkage between these policies and their impacts in terms of environmental degradation and poverty has not been sufficiently made. Today, however, it is clear that economic growth must be promoted within the context of sustainable development if market forces are to be used for improving the quality of life for future generations. Nevertheless, the balance between a business's need for generating profit and a community's need for access to a clean environment is not always easy to find.

And yet, successful examples exist in Africa where companies have found this balance. Businesses from local telecom centers across the region to the world's largest oil companies are showing how responsible, sustainable business practices actually cut costs and raise revenues over the long-term. These entrepreneurs are demystifying the idea that businesses cannot bear both the start-up costs of starting a business in the developing world while at the same time bear the social and environmental costs of being "responsible". Shrimp farming is a good example where this belief no longer holds; where sustainable ecosystem management is, in fact, central to the business plan.

In the conclusions and recommendations of our Regional Study on *Economic Opportunities in Shrimp Farming in West Africa*, we have put forward an approach which we call “blended value” that incorporates the social/cultural, environmental and financial value creation that has been proven necessary for maintaining successful shrimp farms. Our study also encourages South-South Cooperation, in order to build upon the valuable lessons learned from the Asian shrimp farming industry, as well as the new and improved production techniques which have emerged in this region.

Considering the results of the SWAC’s Regional Study which adopted an integrated methodology focusing on the technical, marketing, investment, socio-cultural, environmental, and political aspects of shrimp aquaculture, we learned that West Africa does indeed have existing potential for shrimp farming. This Roundtable is an attempt to further explore these possibilities and to facilitate public-private synergies and knowledge-sharing.

Concluding remarks: Importance of South-South Cooperation and Public-Private Partnerships

Our focus on bringing together Asian and African experiences is linked to the Club’s fundamental commitment to South-South cooperation as a means for promoting West African sustainable business solutions. Private sector-driven solutions are sustainable when they are developed using local expertise, with necessary support for the public sector. Asia’s experiences with this process in aquaculture can provide many helpful insights. With the emergence of aquaculture around the world, particularly in Asia, the opportunity exists today for West Africa to harness this technology, to learn from existing best practices in Asia and Africa, and to create strong public-private cooperation to develop these sustainable business solutions.

Nevertheless, the physical parameters of aquaculture and shrimp farming development need to be respected by both the private and public sector alike. Clear guidelines and incentives are needed to protect existing natural resources and ecosystems on the national and regional levels. Unlike economies and markets which can grow, ecosystems can only transform. Due to the high ecological risks involved in shrimp farming activities, we suggest that the precautionary principle be the starting point for governments and for private sector, coupled with a blended value approach, when considering starting a shrimp farm in the region. Our partners from NACA and FAO, international leaders in this arena with the World Bank and the Worldwide Fund for Nature, will present suggestions of how public and private sector actors can operate within the internationally recognized guidelines for sustainable shrimp farming.

Over the next three days we will be discussing and debating the potential and challenges to developing shrimp farming in West Africa. Many of you have personal expertise to offer, some of you are interested in new investments, some of you manage knowledge and training centres, and some of you are here representing your respective governments and organizations. I want to sincerely thank you all for travelling from your different corners of the world to come to Guinea for this important Roundtable. I am confident that the outcomes of this meeting will be concrete and action-oriented, with all of your valuable perspectives, and will bear fruit in the form of new business opportunities, new technical

cooperation partnerships and, above all, new alliances between people who share a common goal – finding the best, most sustainable way for West Africa to realize the many benefits of aquaculture for today, and for generations the come.

Once again, I would like to thank you for being here and welcome you to this Roundtable.