

African Regional Agricultural Credit Association

Item 6: Universal Periodic Review – Poland

Mr. President,

It has been more than 25 years now that Poland entered into a transformation from a Communist Country to that of a vibrant democracy characterised by western norms such as rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights. The government of Poland is deeply committed to all international obligations, in particular those related to human rights.

Poland has also been performing remarkably well on the economic front. With a Gross Domestic Product of USD 475 billion (in 2015), Poland is ranked 25th among the world's largest economic powers. The EU Commission, World Bank and Polish National Bank estimate Poland's economic growth at 3.5 to 4 percent between now and 2018, with Polish industry contributing a significant share. Poland's agricultural sector has also undergone significant changes over the past 25 years, and the country now has the potential to become Europe's major food production and processing hub. The Polish farming sector has become one of Europe's most innovative, and boasts a higher number of young farmers than any other EU country. Impressive growth has been experienced in the organic farming sector and Poland now has about 25 000 organic farms and 500 companies that process organic produce

Poland has pursued a policy of sustainable development and has paid adequate attention to the issues of environmental concerns and climate change. Since the early 1990s Poland has made remarkable environmental progress, meeting most of its environmental targets and decoupling a number of environmental pressures from economic growth. This progress reflects both the reshaping of its economy and a strengthening of its environmental policies. On 29 July 2016, the Polish Ministry of Development published a Strategy for Responsible Development which also among outlines the country's vision for energy and environmental policy. The strategy outlines a number of planned changes to the current Polish law. Firstly, it states that smart metering will be added to Polish energy law. Poland will also develop a GHG emission reduction policy and will aim at creating a legal framework aiming at: increasing consumer's awareness related to impact of air pollution; standardisation of heating appliances and heating fuels; and development of mechanisms controlling the low-emission energy sources.

Poland is making great strides with respect to gender equality. According to PwC's fifth update to the Women in Work Index which provides the assessment of female empowerment across 33 OECD countries, Poland stands out for achieving the largest annual improvement among European countries. The country rose from 12th to 9th position due to fall in female unemployment and an increase in the full-time employment rate. Poland is said to converge gender pay gaps by within the next 20 years, presumably by 2021. Since the Polish gap is already quite low (only 6.7 per cent), it may possible take even less time to close than in other countries. The introduction of quotas for women in certain elections is also a welcome development.

Thank you for your attention.