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**Statement by H.E. Mr Souleymane
Diarrassouba, Minister of Commerce, Craft
Industries and SMEs, representing the Prime
Minister of Côte d'Ivoire,
made at the opening ceremony of the
120th Session of the Council**

Governor of the autonomous district of Yamoussoukro,
Regional Prefect, Prefect of the department of Yamoussoukro,
Mayor of the Commune of Yamoussoukro,
Chairman of the International Coffee Council,
Executive Director of the International Coffee Organization,
Ladies and gentlemen, honourable delegates of Member countries of the International Coffee
Organization,
Distinguished traditional elders of Yamoussoukro,
Honourable religious elders and dignitaries of Yamoussoukro,
Ladies and gentlemen of the press,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Once again, it is my honour and pleasant duty, on behalf of H.E. Mr Amadou Gon Coulibaly,
Prime Minister, Minister for the Budget and State Portfolio and Chairman of this meeting, to
convey my fraternal greetings to you all; and, with our typical Ivorian hospitality, may I say
again "AKWABA", a traditional welcome to Yamoussoukro, a land of peace and friendship.

Ladies and gentlemen,

By giving Côte d'Ivoire responsibility for organizing the 120th Session of the International
Coffee Council here in Yamoussoukro, the International Coffee Organization has given us not
only the time to share views and reflect on the world coffee economy, but also the
opportunity to pay tribute to African coffee growers and, in particular, to honour the eternal
memory of H.E. Mr Félix Houphouët-Boigny, first President and founding father of modern
Côte d'Ivoire and driver of its coffee development policy.

I would therefore like, once more, to extend the gratitude of the Ivorian Government to the Executive Director and Secretariat of the ICO and repeat that Côte d'Ivoire is committed to playing a full role in the Organization's responsibilities and in the shared decisions to be taken to develop and promote a sustainable coffee economy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Côte d'Ivoire, a country whose economy is based, to a large extent, on cash crops such as coffee, looks forward to studying the findings of this meeting, which it hopes will produce dynamic strategies and measures to make coffee a true source of sustainable economic development.

Under the leadership of H.E. Mr Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic, my country is committed to developing a strong and sustainable agricultural economy. If I may quote the President of the Republic: "With agriculture contributing to the first stages of strong and sustainable growth towards emergence, we must promote agricultural productivity and the processing of agricultural products to develop the secondary sector, which will, in turn, also stimulate the services sector, so that our products enjoy better access to external markets."

In line with the above, the Government has taken important measures to:

- Improve the governance of agricultural sectors, particularly by reforming the cotton, cashew nut, cocoa and coffee sectors, leading to a substantial increase in producer revenues.
- Significantly increase the national budget devoted to investment in agriculture through the national agricultural investment programme, estimated at CFA 2,040 billion over five years.
- Undertake an in-depth reform of agricultural training and initiate a far-reaching process of agricultural mechanization.

More specifically, for several years, this committed ambition has been reflected in the implementation of the coffee rehabilitation programme, which seeks to improve the quantity and quality of coffee production and processing and ensure better living conditions for coffee growers.

With those objectives in mind, by 2020, Côte d'Ivoire seeks to meet a coffee production target of 200,000 tonnes and a roasting rate of 50%.

Current national production stands at 106,000 tonnes, though output recorded in June 2017 fell compared to June 2016, due in particular to the impact of the drought, which coincided with the flowering of the coffee trees.

We will address this major challenge with the help of our traditional partners and the support of all friendly countries.

I believe that many producing countries represented here today are in the same position. The common problem lies in the strategies to be introduced to ensure that coffee makes a more structural and significant contribution to GDP in our countries.

Drawing a lesson from current weaknesses in the cocoa and rubber sectors in particular, this is why our strategies must address the urgent need to promote a highly profitable value chain for coffee growing at economic and financial level that will benefit agricultural populations and our national economies.

Of course we must produce, but we must do so in response to the challenges we currently face.

The scarcity of cultivable soils, increasingly exacerbated by rampant urbanization in our countries and the devastating effects of climate change, the marked indifference of the youth to coffee growing because of harsh working conditions in our poorly mechanized agriculture and the fragility of price levels, which are naturally influenced by market forces, require experts and policy makers such as ourselves to establish joint actions that encourage us to rethink coffee production strategies and refocus agricultural, industrial and trade policies in producing countries.

Such countries are gradually taking greater interest in sustainability programmes, with varying degrees of success.

In this connection, a modern, high-quality mechanized production system, the processing of over 60% of output and more permanent and more substantial local consumption must be encouraged to contribute to the sustainability of the coffee economy.

The challenges to be faced in this area are:

- To promote active, forward-looking research into plant performance and opportunities for the further use of coffee beans, coffee tree leaves, etc., and into current and future consumption needs.
- To encourage and support all innovative production initiatives that protect the environment, safeguard protected forested areas and combat child labour.
- To mobilize the resources essential for transforming, promoting and broadening the local consumption of production.
- To ensure that coffee growers receive incomes that offer prospects for a brighter future.

Ladies and gentlemen, honourable delegates,

The coffee community we intend to build through our common organization cannot disregard these concerns and still less the joint efforts to be made to address them.

Consumers and producers will benefit from such measures to preserve current achievements but, in particular, to secure a future and shared prosperity together.

This entails pooling resources for carrying out research and disseminating its results and introducing mechanisms to support policies and programmes to modernize coffee growing and ensure capacity-building for coffee producers. It also involves wide-ranging assistance for programmes to promote the consumption of coffee-based products in particular.

These, ladies and gentlemen, are some of the issues I would like to share with you on behalf of the Prime Minister, and I am sure that, if they are not already matters for discussion and reflection, they will doubtless make a contribution to your deliberations.

And now, hoping that you have a fruitful and pleasant stay in Yamoussoukro and wishing you every success in your work, on behalf of H.E. Mr Amadou Gon Coulibaly, Prime Minister and Chairman of today's meeting, I declare open the 120th Session of the International Coffee Council.

Thank you.