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SPEECH FOR CIP's 45th ANNIVERSARY

Mrs. Nane Annan, Special guest

Lima, September 16, 2016

1. Dear friends, it is a huge privilege to be with you today.
2. My husband joins me in wishing you all a very happy anniversary!
3. Your location here in Lima highlights that Peru is the home of the potato.
4. And yet, coming from far-away Sweden, I can testify to its importance for our survival there for the hundreds of years after we discovered that the "earth apple" could be used for eating.
5. And what a wonderful birthday gift you received this year when 3 of your scientists received the World Food Prize for their ground-breaking research on the bio-fortified orange-fleshed sweet-potato. Congratulations!
6. I have had the good fortune to meet Jan Low twice in Ghana and am very happy now to meet Maria Andrade and Robert Mwanga.
7. Allow me also to congratulate Barbara Wells for her leadership and strong commitment to improving the lives of the most vulnerable.
8. I am certain that the recognition by the World Food Prize Foundation of the benefits of OFSP for food and nutrition security will help extend its reach into the regions where it is most needed.
9. Malnutrition, as we know, remains a serious barrier to development, particularly in rural areas in Africa.
10. It is denying children, communities and nations from reaching their full potential.

11. Fortunately, there is now a growing consensus amongst African and international leaders that we can achieve nutrition security through adequate policy frameworks, increased investments, and more partnerships.
12. And of course through research and innovation in science – areas in which CIP has become a preeminent leader over the course of its 45-year history.
13. It is with the story of the OFSP that my relationship with CIP began a few years ago in Ghana.
14. I learned that the beauty of OFSP is its nutritional value, in particular its high vitamin A component and its related health benefits, which can help the most vulnerable of all - pregnant women, new mothers and children.
15. I learned that it can grow in poor soils, produce good yields in a short growing period – even under changing weather patterns, and improve revenues along the value chain.
16. I learned about the extensive experience with OFSP that had already been made in some Eastern and Southern African countries and CIP's expansion of its programmes to Ghana.
17. Recognizing the problem of stunting, in particular in Northern Ghana, where more than a third of the children under 5 suffer from stunted growth, CIP has set itself the ambitious goal of reaching at least half a million households in Ghana with nutritious sweetpotatoes by 2022.
18. With CIP already in Ghana, it was easy to get in touch with your enthusiastic representatives, Ted Carey and later Erna Abidin, and arrange two advocacy meetings for my husband and myself in 2015, in Kumasi and in Tamale in Northern Ghana.
19. After enlightened discussions with Barbara Wells, Jan Low, Adiel Mbabu and Simon Heck, we inspected the different OFSP varieties being bred at the CSIR-Crop Research Institute and tasted them in all shapes and forms in delicious local dishes!
20. CIP wisely included various national and international stakeholders to reinforce the link between agriculture, nutrition and health.
21. Amongst them were the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as the Ghana Health Services – the former is key when formulating nutrition-smart agricultural policies; the latter is particularly important for its involvement with pregnant women and school-feeding programmes.

22. The UN World Food Programme, an important player in school-feeding programmes, recognized the potential of OFSP.
23. But above all, for the necessary scale and sustainability, it is essential to engage the private sector and agricultural producers, including smallholder farmers and agribusinesses.
24. Experience has shown that income-generating opportunities will help acceptance and spread of OFSPs.
25. But it has to be a careful calibration of demand and supply in order not to lead to frustrations on either side.
26. Offering vocational training to youth and farmers associations is an important tool in developing all market opportunities and value chains inherent in the production, processing and marketing of OFSPs.
27. But allow me to share with you a few individual stories and examples, which illustrate the potential around sweetpotatoes for nutrition, the empowerment of women, and income generation.
28. It was in 2015 when we first met Mr. Darkey, who became a key person in our latest promotional tour just over a month ago.
29. Mr. Darkey is a commercial farmer with un-ending enthusiasm and energy, active in the Volta region with far-reaching plans to expand into the Central region.
30. He strongly believes that sweetpotatoes do not only provide an agricultural response to the problems of child nutrition and hidden hunger, but are also a good business opportunity.
31. And he is right – OFSPs from the Volta Region can now be purchased at supermarkets such as Shoprite in the capital city Accra.
32. We were now heading deep into the Volta region for one of the highlights of the visit under the able guidance of Ted and Erna.
33. It was also a special treat that Jan was joining us.

34. In the Volta Region, we met with Mrs. Kono, once a home maker, who is now heading a bakery and employing 200 women.
35. Since a while back, I had been hearing about the possibility of introducing OFSPs into bread.
36. The bread prevalent in Ghana is made out of expensive imported wheat, which is costing the country about 150 million USD each year.
37. Mrs. Kono is successfully substituting the wheat by up to 50 percent with steamed and mashed OFSPs, and selling her bread at a roadside stop of the main road leading on to Togo, Benin and Nigeria.
38. What a win-win situation to substitute it for nutritious and also delicious home-grown OFSPs! This is what's happening now!
39. Suffice to say that Mrs Kono's "golden bread" we were supposed to taste had already been sold out when we reached her shop.
40. Ghana's Minister of Tourism and Culture, who was with us on this trip, was so impressed by this female entrepreneur that she promised to invite her to her many well-published events as a role model.
41. As the Ghana head of the African Queens and Women Cultural Leaders Network, she also promised to use this platform to help promote OFSP for the well-being of women and children.
42. A representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, too, recognised the huge potential of sweetpotatoes and promised to remind the Minister of our visit to him to promote OFSPs as a priority crop.
43. And during our stay in Ghana front page news was a statement by the officer in charge of the Roots and Tubers in the Ministry who called for a number of policy interventions and increased investment to boost the capacity of farmers in the cultivation and production of sweet potato.
44. Those are important steps in the right direction.

45. But there is another key point, emphasized by my husband at a durbar, organised for us in the Volta Region.
46. He noted that “the development of the agricultural sector is one of the major ways to address the challenge of ever-increasing rural-urban migration as it employs the majority of the youth who keep moving into the cities for non-existent jobs.”
47. He continued saying that, “Africa must begin to feed itself and avoid spending heavily to produce what it does not eat and import what it eats”.
48. Dear friends, realizing this vision will of course not happen overnight.
49. I am here as a happy enthusiast, and whenever I talk about the OFSP it brings a smile to my face.
50. In Ghana, I see first-hand the wonderful impact sweetpotatoes can have in helping address stunting amongst children and improving the health of pregnant women and mothers; in providing jobs for youth, and ensuring income for smallholders in times of climate change.
51. My husband, I and the Kofi Annan Foundation are looking forward to working with CIP and the private sector on this important effort.
52. I am full of confidence that OFSP or the “golden sweet potato” will create golden opportunities for health and wealth, not just in Ghana, but also in West Africa and beyond. Thank you.

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