Remarks of the Secretary General of IACO (HE Mr. Frederick Kawuma) at the Press Launch of the IACO Magazine, at Hotel Pullman, Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire, on 5th September 2013.

Representatives of the various Ministries: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Representatives of the various Embassies and International Organisations The Director General of the Coffee & Cocoa Council of Cote d’Ivoire Distinguished Guests Members of the Press Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure for me to address you, as Secretary General of the Inter-African Coffee Organisation (IACO), being the first such occasion since I took up this office earlier this year. I would like thank all who have made me feel so welcome, and helped me to adjust to this my new home.

I thank you all for responding to our invitation to the re-launch of our coffee magazine – African Coffee – which went out of publication some years back. This launch is significant to us because it is part of our public relations campaign in creating awareness of what this organisation is all about – what we do and where we are going.

IACO was born in 1960, before the independence of many African states, and is one of the oldest inter-governmental organisations in Africa today. Cote d’Ivoire was one of the founder members. IACO is an international commodity body, specifically responsible for coffee in Africa. The secretariat was moved to Abidjan in 1976, and a Headquarters agreement was signed between the Organisation and the Government of Cote d’Ivoire. IACO was well received, and the Government has provided us with accommodation since then, and there is much goodwill for which we are very grateful.

Over the years, IACO made significant contributions to the coffee industry, although in the last ten years or so, the organisation has faced the same challenges as has the nation of Cote d’Ivoire itself. Thus, many of IACO’s programmes were disrupted. At the same time, the global coffee situation became so bad that most of the member countries were really struggling to keep above the water. Africa’s position in the global market place declined substantially so that our share in global exports is less than half of what it used to be in the 1980s, and yet global production has increased by almost 30% over the same period.

At the present time, Africa’s prospects look quite good, due to the positive trends in the consumer markets, but we have to put our act together as African producers, in order to take advantage of the opportunities that are coming up. IACO is committed to playing its intended role as an
international commodity body that is the mouth-piece for African coffee matters.

We would also work to get our respective governments to implement policies that will favour Africa’s increased productivity and quality improvement. We have redefined IACO’s priorities, and have developed a new strategic focus. This involves a clear statement of IACO’s vision and mission, and the strategic objectives that will guide its operations and interventions. Some of the above matters are covered in this issue of the magazine and we’ll be building on these in the future editions, which will come out on a quarterly basis. However, it is the first of various publications that we intend to produce as we go along.

IACO’s interventions will require building bridges towards all stakeholders, communication being vital in all this, and various channels will be used to keep members informed and active in what is going on. We have specifically noted the urgent need to connect with members and provide awareness for sharing information. We believe that access to information is vital in our fight to improve the quality and productivity of Africa’s coffee. We will use various means of connecting with members and provide avenues for sharing information. Thus, the magazine has been relaunched in response to that need and it is hoped that it will keep members informed and active in what is going on, and will be an important part of our communication strategy.

Along with the magazine, we are also working on a new IACO website (www.iaco-oiac.org), which is still work in progress. This will also be instrumental in keeping the members informed about what is going on in the different IACO countries, projects both regional and country-specific, as well as the different partnerships that the Organisation is establishing for the benefit of the member countries. I hope that the re-designed website, which will continue to be improved, will provide a forum for discussion and exchange on issues affecting African coffee. Soft copies of the magazine will be downloadable from the website, while we will mail hard copies to the member countries. Hard copies will also be distributed to different Missions, Government and business offices and lounges, as well as airlines, hotels and restaurants, among others.

We are grateful to the Government of Cote d’Ivoire for the hospitality that has been accorded to IACO, and for its role as one of the key supporters of the organisation which has kept it going. We give special thanks to the President, **HE Dr. Alassane Ouattara**, and his Cabinet.

I thank you all very much for coming and for listening to me. God bless you all.