



**CONCEPT NOTE  
of the**

**Inaugural Conference of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment**

**Theme:**

**Advancing concerted action for improved livelihoods in Africa**

**Venue: Addis Ababa; Ethiopia**

**Date: October 5 – 9, 2015**



## 1. BACKGROUND

The African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted the configuration of the Specialised Technical Committees (STCs) and the modalities of their operationalization (Assembly/AU/Dec.227 (XII) and Decision Assembly/ AU/Dec.365 (XVII) in January 2009 and July 2011, respectively as Organs of the Union in accordance with Article 5 (1) (g) of the Constitutive Act. One of the Specialized Technical Committees recommended for establishment is the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment. The Specialized Technical Committees are composed of Ministers or senior officials responsible for sectors falling within their respective areas of competence. They are responsible for preparing projects and programmes of the Union and submitting them to the Executive Council. They also have the duty to ensure the supervision, follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of decisions taken by the organs of the Union and the coordination and harmonization of projects and programmes of the Union. The STC is also expected to carry out any other functions assigned to it for the purpose of ensuring the implementation of the provisions of relevant AU Acts.

The STCs are expected to meet at least every two years in order to discharge the responsibilities vested upon them by the AU Assembly. Accordingly the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) of the African Union Commission in partnership with The NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) is organizing the Inaugural Conference of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment scheduled to be held from 5th – 9th October 2015 at the AUC Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

This Concept Note is therefore designed to provide the background, the issues to be discussed, the objectives, expected outcomes as well as structure of the Inaugural Conference of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment.

## 2. RATIONALE

The year 2015 marks a significant milestone in guiding both global and African Sustainable Development for the years to come. The United Nations General assembly is expected to endorse the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015. The Twenty First session of United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP21), scheduled for December 2015, is expected to reach a legally binding agreement on Climate Change. The Malabo Declaration on Africa Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation (3AGT), with its clearly articulated commitments on eradicating hunger, halving poverty, boosting intra-African trade and enhancing the resilience of production systems and livelihoods to climate change and other shocks, is calling action for impact and sustaining the CAADP Momentum.

Furthermore, the Malabo Declaration also requested AUC/DREA and NPCA to prepare a specific CAADP Implementation Strategy and Roadmap (IS&R). The IS&R was developed and endorsed by the Executive Council with two elaborated strategic goals: (i) transformed agriculture and sustained and inclusive growth, and (ii) strengthened systemic capacity to implement and deliver results. A series of platforms were organized for consultations and dialogues among AUC/DREA, NPCA, Regional Economic



Communities(RECs), AU Member States and development and technical partners which resulted in shaping and producing the Programme of Work (PoW) which identified the following key Action Areas: (1) build and strengthen capacity for evidence-based planning, implementation, review and dialogue; (2) review and implement policy and institutional reforms that strengthen leadership, management and technical capacity in agriculture; (3) strengthen local ownership and leadership to champion agriculture and the CAADP agenda, and align coordination and implementation partnerships; (4) enhance skills and knowledge and agricultural education; (5) strengthen data and statistics for evidence based planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and review processes; (6) establish and institutionalize mutual accountability mechanisms with regular peer reviews and strong dialogue platforms; and (7) identify and enhance innovative financing models for increased public and private sector finance for agriculture investments along the value chain.

With regard to environment and climate change, the Malabo Declaration further requested the Commission in collaboration with the STCs to undertake study on identification of five African Regional Technology Centres which would 1) link and network with National Designated Climate Technology Entities (NDEs) as well as with the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN); 2) elaborate on the implementation of the CAHOSCC Youth Programme on Climate Change (CYPCC) to enhance youth engagement in climate change actions; 3) Develop a CAHOSCC Women and Gender Programme on Climate Change (CWGPCC) to engage women and gender in climate change related actions; 4) prepare an African Climate Resilient Agricultural Development Programme (ACRADP) in the context of Africa's Agricultural growth transformation; 5) put in place a Sustainable Forest Management Programme in Africa (SFMPA) in collaboration with African Ministers responsible for Forestry and Energy.

The African Union Commission in its efforts to conserve Africa's wild flora and fauna as well as fight against wildlife crime (illegal exploitation and illegal trade) adopted Decision EX.CL/Dec.832 (XXV) on African Wild Flora and Fauna Conservation and Illegal Trade in Wildlife in June 2014. Among other key issues, the Decision calls the development of an African Common Strategy on Combatting Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora. The Strategy has since been developed and was endorsed at the June 2015 Summit – with domestication and implementation as the next steps.

In the Water and Sanitation Sector, African Heads of States and Government have adopted the Sharm El Sheikh Declarations [Assembly/AU/ Decl.1 (XI)] in June 2008 to fast track implementation of the African Water Sector Goals, and most importantly to achieve targets set in the MGDs and the African Water Vision 2025 in line with many other declarations in the sector such as the 2004 Sirte Declaration on integrated development of Agriculture and Water in Africa [Ex/Assembly/AU/Decl. 1(II)].

In Addition, various strategic documents which are aligned to continental and regional policies and frameworks have been developed which include the Strategic Plan for Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (2015 – 2025), The Implementation Strategy and Road Map for the Continental Agribusiness Strategy, Strategy on Climate Change, the Africa Regional Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction and its Plan of Action, the Kigali Action Plan on Water and Sanitation, Implementation of the African Common Strategy on Combatting Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Flora and Fauna in Africa, the implementation of the Integrated African Strategy of Meteorology (Weather and Climate Services), the Regional Strategy on the implementation of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative and the Rules of Procedure of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment, to mention a few. These strategic documents fall within the trust of various sector ministries within the STC on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment. Thus, The



STC on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment is the most appropriate STC to consider all the above issues and synergize mechanism for achieving the desired visions and goals.

Cognizant of the role of the STC in ensuring supervision, follow-up and the evaluation of the implementation of decisions taken by the organs of the Union and the coordination and harmonization of projects and programmes of the union, and also of need for critical review and then endorsement of these strategic documents by AU Policy organs, as well as strengthening and aligning tools and platforms and capacity at all levels, the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission and NEPAD Coordinating and Planning Agency are co-organizing this Inaugural Conference of the STC on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment.

### **3. OBJECTIVES**

The overall objectives of the Inaugural Conference of the AU Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment is to review relevant strategic goals, facilitate mutual accountability and Identify synergies, linkages and complementarities in on-going agriculture, rural development, water and environment related initiatives, and their implications on the achievement of the overarching goals of Africa Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation (3AGT) agenda for attaining food and nutrition security, reduce poverty, boost intra-African trade, and enhance resilience of production systems and livelihoods to Climate Change and related shocks. More specifically, the Inaugural Conference of the AU Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment aims to attain the following objectives:

- a. To review and adopt the Rules of Procedure of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment;
- b. To facilitate broad-based consultation and dialogue among all relevant stakeholders on mutual accountability, mutual learning and biennial reporting on previous commitments;
- c. Consideration of various strategic documents related to Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment;
- d. To identify synergies, linkages and complementarities in on-going agriculture, rural development, water and environment initiatives and agree on areas of follow up actions at various levels; and
- e. To examine and internalize the strategic and operational modalities for coordination mechanisms between the relevant sector ministries at Member State level, which are also linked to those at REC level.

The STC Conference will therefore provide a peer environment for exchange and learning to support the achievement of individual and collective responsibilities for relevant sector ministries targets.

### **4. EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

The envisaged outcomes of the Inaugural Conference of the AU Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment are:



- a. The Rules of Procedure of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment adopted;
- b. Modalities and mechanisms for mutual accountability, mutual learning and biennial reporting agreed;
- c. Various relevant strategic documents reviewed and pertinent decisions adopted;
- d. Agreements on synergies, linkages and complementarities in on-going agriculture, rural development water and environment initiatives identified and areas of follow up actions at various levels obtained.

## 5. LOCATION, MEETING DATE AND ARRANGEMENTS

The Inaugural Meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment is scheduled to take place from 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015 at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

## 6. FORMAT AND STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE

The Inaugural Conference of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment will have Ministerial segment that will be held on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015, which will be preceded by a two day meeting of Senior Officials/Experts that will take place on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> October 2015 to examine the various documents and prepare their report to the Ministers.

Various side events and stakeholders' forums will be organized on the margins of the Conference on October 7, 2015 to facilitate consultations and contribute to an interactive Ministerial session that will be held on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015. The 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2015 will also be used to prepare and adopt the reports of the Senior Officials/Experts to be submitted for consideration by the Ministers.

### 6.1. *Senior Officials/Experts Meeting*

There will be plenary and parallel sessions for Experts/Senior Officials to facilitate deliberations and review of documents, these include:

- **Opening Plenary Session**
- **Parallel Session A:** The Agriculture and Rural Development Experts Session to review and consider relevant reports;
- **Parallel Session B:** The Environment and Natural Resource Experts Session to review and consider relevant documents and reports;
- **Parallel Session C:** The Experts on Water Session to review and consider relevant reports;
- **Parallel Session D:** The Livestock and Fisheries Experts Session to review and consider relevant reports;
- **Plenary Session of Experts/Senior Officials:** to review and consider reports and issues on the reports of the parallel sessions and the theme of the Conference.



Both the plenary and parallel sessions of experts/senior officials will be conducted on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

## **6.2. The Ministerial Session**

The two days Ministerial session will be conducted in a format that on the one hand facilitates inclusive and interactive conversations and dialogue among the ministers as well as between the Ministers and key strategic stakeholders, and on the other hand allows the Ministers to consider strategic reports and items that warrant their considerations in a closed session. Hence, the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the conference will be devoted to an open interactive session, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> and final day will be devoted to a closed session.

The Ministerial session is scheduled for the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2015.

## **7. CONFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

1. Draft Rules of Procedure of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment;
2. Communiqué of the Permanent Secretaries/Head of Ministries Leadership Retreat on Operationalizing the Malabo Declaration;
3. On-going initiatives on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment:
  - Malabo Declaration on Africa Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation;
  - Implementation Strategy and Road Map to Achieve the 2015 Vision on CAADP;
  - The Programme of Work for Operationalizing the Malabo Declaration on African Agriculture;
  - Draft Implementation Strategy and Road Map for Agribusiness Strategy;
  - CAADP Guide for National Agriculture and Food Security Investment Plans (NAIPs) appraisal and biennial reporting (mutual accountability, mutual learning)
  - The Strategy for mobilising continental agribusiness and private sector apex body
  - Draft Strategic Plan for Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (2015-2025);
  - Water and Sanitation Initiatives: (i) *The Kigali Action Plan*; (ii) *The Operation 2M4M for universal access to water supply and sanitation*; (iii) *The Pan-ProSan (Panafrikan Programme for Productive Sanitation)*; (iv) *The African Clean Village Programme*;
  - Initiatives on satellite earth observation for meteorological, environmental and climate monitoring: *The Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA) programme*;
  - Draft Policy Framework for Integrating Tsetse and Trypanosomosis (T&T) Eradication Programmes in Sustainable Rural Development Strategies;
  - Guide for the implementation of the policy framework and reform strategy for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa;
  - The Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa (S3A)
  - Draft Continental Strategic and Implementation Plans for Plant Health (2014-2023)



- The Livestock Development Strategy for Africa