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AUC Chairperson calls for enhanced efforts to fight hunger and malnutrition

Addis Ababa 31 October 2012 - African Union Commission (AUC) Chairperson, H.E Dr. Nkhosazana Dlamini-Zuma has called for enhanced efforts in Africa to fight hunger and malnutrition.



Dr. Dlamini-Zuma, represented by AUC Deputy Chairperson, H.E Erastus Mwencha, said the realisation that Africa was unlikely to meet the first of the Millennium Development Goals (to halve hunger and poverty) by 2015, was alarming.

Dr. Dlamini-Zuma was speaking during the 3rd commemoration of the Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security, attended by high-level leaders from global, regional and national agriculture associations, African and other governments, civil society and farmers' organizations, the private sector, scientific and research institutions, farmer organizations and development partners.

"This should be a crude awakening to all policy makers and implementers," she said. Food and Nutrition Security underlie all our developmental efforts in Africa. It defines the depth and breadth of our strategies as continental organisations, as regional bodies, as countries and as civil society. It determines the seriousness of any government and system of governance. It simply draws the line between responsible and irresponsible leadership. It is a challenge we have to face head on."

Dr. Dlamini-Zuma however noted that under the guidance of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Programme (CAADP), some Member States had started to score marked

progress in terms of economic development indicators due to investment in and resourcing of the broader agricultural sector.

Officially opening the commemoration ceremony, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture, Hon. Mitiku Kassa said, agriculture should play a greater role in improving food nutrition and security by promoting the growing of nutritious crops and food.

"Now is the time to look for solutions that will not only make agriculture profitable but also for the maximum benefit of human beings. Let us concentrate our energies to reduce and eradicate hunger and malnutrition," he said.



H.E Mrs. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, AUC's Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture said that the main expected outcome of the event was to get political commitment and adoption of food and nutrition security priorities based on continent, regional and national frameworks.

NEPAD Agency CEO, Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki said, "We all appreciate that nutrition remains a key that unlocks the door for achieving and optimizing human potential,

and national economic development."

Meanwhile, in a live address beamed to the audience, David Nabarro, Coordinator of UNHTFL on Global Food Crisis highlighted the importance of Agriculture in Food and Nutrition Security and creating stability in the continent. "There is a clear need to expand agriculture to involve smallholders in the food system and create earning opportunities particularly within Sub-Saharan Africa. Within this region, 330 million young people will enter the job market over the next 15 years. 200 million will live in rural areas; they will depend on Agriculture for their employment" he said.

He however commended the progress of CAADP implementation in Africa and the efforts of governments to further its agenda.

The objectives of the commemoration include the creation of a platform in which food and nutrition security stakeholders discuss solutions and make recommendations on Food and Nutrition Security issues in Africa. The commemoration also aims to strengthen momentum towards achieving the MDGs, and what could follow the MDGs after 2015. This year's event is commemorated under the theme "Ensuring access to safe and nutritious foods."

With the current statistics showing that 216 million Africans are chronically malnourished (30% of population); 5 million die of hunger annually; 126 million children are underweight and that about 50% children are stunted – more needs to be done and platforms such as the Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security provide an opportunity to come up with solutions.

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