



Midrand, South Africa 22 November 2012- The two day retreat for African parliamentarians responsible for agricultural, food security and environmental issues has ended in Midrand South Africa, with the adoption of a communiqué that outlines the key discussions, and agreed actions.

The meeting was officially closed by the AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture Mrs Rhoda Peace Tumussiime. In closing the meeting, the Commissioner said:



“There were, indeed, valid calls for the institutionalization of this interaction. There were also recommendations for more systematic sharing of best practices and success stories in promoting agriculture, food and nutrition security as well as advancing natural resource management and sustainable development. One other key area that was given due emphasis at this retreat and which we

have taken good note of is the need for accelerating implementation of the decisions, declarations and commitments taken at continental, regional and national levels through raising and broadening awareness and appreciation of the same by all stakeholders and partners.”

The Communiqué is attached:



**COMMUNIQUE OF THE RETREAT FOR AFRICAN
PARLIAMENTARIANS RESPONSIBLE FOR
AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY, AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

21 – 22 November 2012

Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa

INTRODUCTION

1. A Retreat for African parliamentarians responsible for agricultural, food security and environmental issues convened by the African Union Commission (AUC), and co-organised with the Pan African Parliament and the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NEPAD Agency) took place at the Pan African Parliament, in Midrand, Republic of South Africa, from 21st to 22nd November 2012.

2. The Retreat was attended by chairpersons and representatives of agriculture and environmental affairs committees of national parliaments from 20 AU Member States as well as members of the Pan African Parliament Committee on Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Environment. The Commissioner of the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) of the AU Commission, H.E. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace and led the AUC delegation. The NEPAD Agency and the Pan African Parliament were represented by respective senior technical staff members. Annex 1 provides the full list of the participants who attended the Retreat.

RETREAT PROGRAMME AND STRUCTURE

3. The Retreat was arranged in three parts: (i) the Opening Session; (ii) paper presentations on key agricultural and natural resource management programme activities undertaken by AUC-DREA and the NEPAD Agency; and (iii) a panel discussion on accelerating implementation of CAADP and sustaining its momentum. Annex 2 provides the Retreat programme.

THE OPENING SESSION

4. Introductory remarks by Hon. Henri Gbone, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, Rural Economy, Natural Resources, and Environment, delivered on behalf of the PAP President, highlighted the role parliamentarians play in the development of national laws and regulations as well as in overseeing the implementation of programmes and projects. He also gave particular emphasis on AU Summit Decisions and Declarations pertaining to agriculture and sustainable development. In this respect, he commended the activities of the AU Commission and the NEPAD Agency in providing the necessary leadership in the roll out and implementation of CAADP. He also underlined the centrality of supporting Summit Decisions and Declarations by effective policies. He concluded his remarks by encouraging the AUC, NPCA and PAP to nurture the partnership between them.

5. In her opening statement, H.E. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, underlined the importance of the Retreat as a forum for enhancing mutual understanding between AUC-DREA and Honourable Parliamentarians and as an opportunity for sharing views on how DREA can work better with the Parliamentarians in the interest of advancing the cause of agriculture, food security and natural resources management in Africa. The Commissioner appreciated the critical role parliamentarians play in the enactment of laws, in holding the Executive accountable for resources and results, and in mobilising the

African citizenry in the fight against poverty, hunger, and malnutrition in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. In this respect, the Commissioner noted the strategic role Parliamentarians play in helping translate into action the various commitments and decisions (such as those on the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme – CAADP) taken by the AU Assembly. The Commissioner's statement also underscored the diverse portfolio which DREA has been involved in as evidenced by the multitude of activities undertaken by the three headquarter-based Divisions and the six Specialised Technical Agencies spread across Africa under the direct management of the Department. The Commissioner also pointed out the service the Department renders to several Ministerial Committees as well as to pertinent Head of State and Government Committees, such as the Committee on African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC). The Commissioner also informed the Retreat about the July 2012 AU Summit Decision on 2014 as a 'Year of Agriculture and Food Security' as well as the commemoration of 10 Years of CAADP. The Commissioner concluded by expressing her confidence that the Retreat would achieve the desired outcomes in the pursuit of the goal of accelerating sustainable agricultural development and environmental management in Africa.

6. Introducing the Retreat Programme and Objectives, Dr. Abebe Haile Gabriel - Director, Rural Economy and Agriculture, AU Commission – noted that the principal objectives of the Retreat were to enhance the awareness of Honourable Parliamentarians on the implementation of the various Summit Decisions and Declarations in agriculture, food security and natural resource management arenas; create opportunities for African parliamentarians responsible for agriculture and natural resources to interact with the management and staff of AUC-DREA and NPCA on strategic issues of mutual interest and concern; and for AUC-DREA and NPCA to obtain political guidance on the way forward.

THE PAPER PRESENTATIONS

7. A total of five PowerPoint presentations were made focusing on the multitude of programme activities that AUC-DREA has been implementing and which are aimed at implementing the different AU Summit Decisions and Declarations. These presentations focused on challenges, opportunities and AU responses in the following thematic areas: implementation of CAADP; complementary Summit Decisions and Declarations on food security and rural economy; the status of integrated natural resources management programme activities within the purview of AUC-DREA; the performance of the animal resources sub-sector in Africa and AUC-DREA's role in enhancing the development of the sub-sector; and the strategy for sustaining the CAADP momentum.

8. The theme-specific presentations were preceded by a background paper that provided comprehensive information on the state of agriculture and environment in Africa, including the challenges the Continent faces in accelerating broad-based, agriculture-led development and the opportunities and potentials Africa has in its pursuit for a clean, green and sustainable development.

9. The presentation on CAADP provided an account of the different milestones in the CAADP process and achievements registered in this respect both at country and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) levels. The presentation also highlighted the engagement of AUC-DREA and the NEPAD Agency in mobilizing financial and technical resources for an accelerated implementation of CAADP. In this regard, the presentation provided information on progress with the mobilisation of public resources from within Africa and from development partners. The presentation also highlighted the crucial role being played by AUC and NPCA in leveraging private sector investment resources in support of the CAADP agenda.

10. The presentation on Summit Decisions and Declarations on food security and rural economy outlined the salient features of these decisions. These included identification of strategic food commodities and promotion of intra-Africa trade; fertilizer utilization and management; financing for agriculture and food security in Africa; plant protection and food safety; framework and guidelines on land policy in Africa; and policy framework on pastoralism in Africa. The presentation also provided an overview of the activities which AU Member States have been undertaking in translating the respective Summit Decisions and Declarations into action as well as the role AUC-DREA played in these respects.

11. The presentation on the environment thematic area provided a broad overview of environment and sustainable development issues in Africa. It also provided an overview of the relevant Summit Decisions and Declarations that guide the activities of DREA in the area of sustainable development and climate change. In this regard, the presentation focused on progress with the implementation of four sets of programme activities that DREA has coordination and oversight roles. These included climate change, water and sanitation; integrated natural resources management, the Fouta Djallon Programme; and Multilateral Environment Agreements.

12. The presentation on animal resources in Africa informed participants that AUC's role covers the support for the entire gamut of the sub-sector ranging from animal husbandry, genetic pool development, marketing and livelihood enhancement of livestock keepers, and animal health. In this regard, mention was made of the role being played by the three Specialised Technical Agencies of the AU dealing directly with issues of animal resources (namely, IBAR, PATTEC, and PANVAC). The presentation provided an account of the imbalance between the demand for and supply of animal resource products and the need for investing in the sub-sector so as to respond to the growing consumer demand in Africa for a variety of animal products and enhance Africa's competitive edge in international markets for the same.

13. As a prelude to the Panel Discussion, a presentation was made on 'Sustaining the CAADP Momentum' noted. The presentation appreciated the progress achieved with respect to the elaboration of investment plans at country and REC levels. It further noted the need for complementing these efforts by strengthening the policy and institutional environment at country level as vehicles for translating investment plans into desirable outcomes of inclusive growth, food and nutrition security and increased incomes. The presentation also noted the visible impact of the forces of

globalization on African food systems as evidenced by the food price hikes and the renewed international private sector attention to Africa's land and water resources. The presentation informed the Retreat that the NEPAD Agency - in close consultation with the AUC and RECs - has embarked on an initiative called 'Sustaining the CAADP Momentum' so as to inform a longer-term strategy for CAADP implementation in line with the changing domestic and global realities. The presentation outlined key elements of this exercise as being renewed focus on institutions, policy and local leadership; knowledge and learning support; and financing agricultural investment. The presentation concluded by underlining the significance of Member States' buy-in and appreciation of and support for this renewed drive.

14. Each of the presentations emphasised the crucial role Parliamentarians have played and are expected to play in ensuring that Summit Decisions, Declarations and associated programmes which AUC-DREA and NPCA coordinate are given the attention they deserve at the country level so as to enable agriculture play its historic role of propelling national socio-economic development.

THE PANEL DISCUSSION

15. A panel discussion on the role Parliamentarians could play in supporting the agricultural transformation agenda in general and accelerating implementation of CAADP in particular was organised. Panellists included Honourable Parliamentarians from Benin, Egypt, Mozambique, and Zambia. The main issues that were deliberated on revolved around the following: communication between AUC and national parliaments; the role parliamentarians could play in enacting supportive agricultural acts; agriculture as an important aspect of intra-African trade and African unity; the role agricultural development can play in laying the foundation for industrialisation; the need for investing in agricultural value addition; the necessity of enriching Africa's soils through application of high-response inputs such as fertilisers and improved seeds; the importance of technology selection and transfer in support of agricultural development; and the critical role political leadership plays in advancing the CAADP agenda.

SUMMARY OF KEY MESSAGES

16. The Parliamentarians appreciated the organisation of the Retreat and the opportunity it afforded them to understand the broad range of activities that the AU Commission has been engaged with in the areas of agriculture, food security, and natural resources management. In this regard, Parliamentarians recognized the critical role DREA, including the six AU Specialised Technical Agencies under its management, have been playing in coordinating the translation into action of the different AU Summit Decisions and Declarations.

17. The Parliamentarians noted the encouraging progress being made in the implementation of CAADP and the significant role being played by the AU Commission and the NEPAD Agency in ensuring that CAADP is implemented taking

due cognizance of the enduring principles of national ownership, inclusiveness and outcome orientation. The Retreat also recognized the current drive towards designing a long-term strategy for enabling CAADP consolidate the gains made so far and meet new challenges affecting agriculture and natural resources in Africa. The Retreat also appreciated the critical role CAADP would play in promoting AU's regional integration agenda. In this respect, the meeting reiterated the added value of national actions in the advancement of regional integration and underlined the need for ensuring complementarities between regional processes and national priorities.

18. The Retreat appreciated the challenges which a rapidly growing economically active population could pose to the development of the Continent. The Retreat at the same time noted that CAADP and the other flagship initiatives which the AU Commission and NPCA coordinate are well-placed to ensure that gainful employment opportunities are created for the growing African workforce.

19. The Retreat recognized the critical role which access to productive land resources could play in increasing the productive capacity of small-holder farmers and livestock keepers and in promoting inclusive agricultural development in a sustainable manner. In this respect, the Retreat appreciated the potentials which AU's Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa has in informing land policy formulation processes.

20. The Retreat underlined the significance of enhancing the commercialization of smallholder agriculture so as to benefit from the growing demand for agricultural commodities. In this respect, the Retreat urged the need for focusing attention on the institution of effective market information systems and on the development of pertinent rural infrastructure.

21. The Retreat noted that in order to respond effectively to the growing demands for food and fiber effectively, mindset changes need to be systematically inculcated in the mindset of smallholder farmers.

22. The Retreat recognized that in order for AU Member States to reap the benefits of intra-African trade, effort has to be exerted towards supporting African agriculturalists to explore options for product specialization and standardization which are critical in these era of globalisation.

23. The Retreat appreciated the significant effort that has been exerted in enabling Africa speak with One Voice in global climate change negotiations and sustainable development deliberations. The Retreat also underlined the need for AU Member States enhance their capacity for adapting to climate change and variability through, among others, investing in well-planned irrigation schemes and targeted agricultural research and development activities.

24. The Retreat underlined the centrality of political leadership especially at the national level and the importance of championing the causes of agriculture and food security at the highest political level. In this respect, the Retreat applauded countries

that have allocated significant resources to their agricultural sector and encourage others to emulate these experiences.

AGREED ACTIONS:

25. Having appreciated the usefulness of the Retreat, Parliamentarians expressed a desire to have such forms of interactions to be organized on a periodic basis and that AUC explores possibilities for institutionalizing organisation of such Retreats.

27. The Retreat urged that effort has to be made to ensure that pertinent information on Summit Decisions and Declarations and progress with their implementation permeates to national parliamentary committees responsible for agriculture, food security, and natural resources. In this regard, the Retreat urged the AUC to avail the required information on Summit Decisions and Declarations and their implementation status to the PAP Committee on Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Environment so that the latter could disseminate them to the respective national parliamentary committees on the broader agricultural agenda. In this respect, attention was also drawn to the importance of sharing specific CAADP commitments at country level, including results of investment plan reviews and Post-Compact Road Maps with Parliamentarians for the latter's information and follow up with the relevant authorities and stakeholders in their respective countries.

28. In view of the varying experiences of CAADP implementation across AU Member States, the Retreat requested the AUC to facilitate experience sharing among Parliamentarians from different AU Member States on issues of CAADP significance, including processes of budget allocation and approval for the agricultural sector.

29. Parliamentarians affirmed their commitment to the targets set in Maputo in 2003, including the 10 per cent budgetary allocation to agriculture and the 6 per cent annual agricultural growth target.

30. The Retreat called upon the AUC to focus on synergies and complementarities between agriculture and other productive sectors in promoting industrial development.

31. The Retreat urged AUC to reinvigorate their engagement with respect to advancing intra-Africa trade including value addition and agro-processing.

32. The Parliamentarians reaffirmed their commitment to advocate for the development and/or strengthening of legal frameworks in support of CAADP implementation.

© Adopted Wednesday, 22 November 2012, Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa